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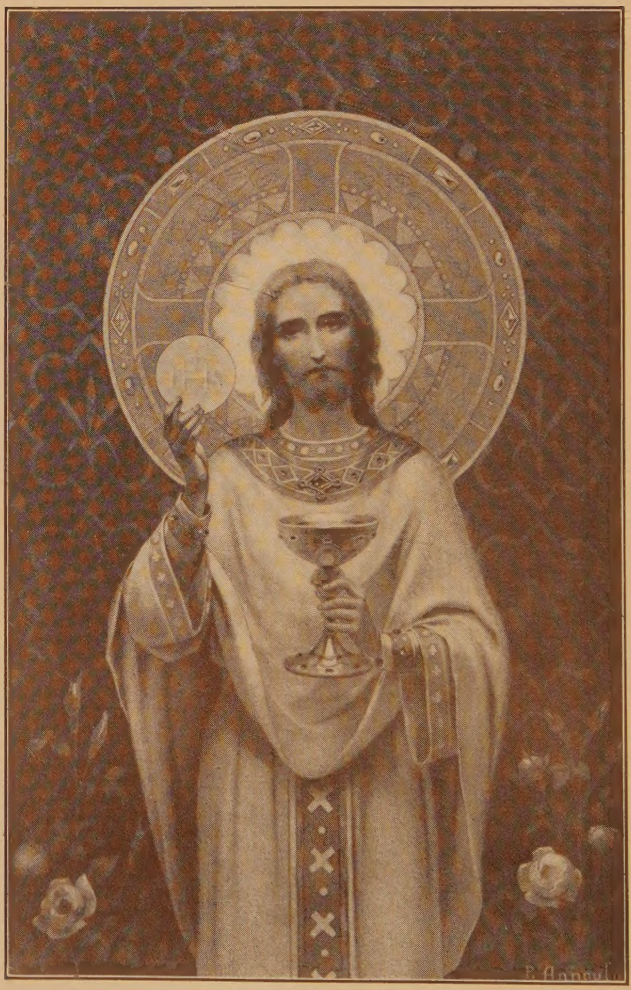

O SALUTARIS HOSTIA

The
MYSTERY OF LOVE

THIRTY CONSIDERATIONS ON THE BLESSED EUCHARIST, WITH EXAMPLES

BY

MOST REV. ALEXIS H. M. LEPICIER, O.S.M.

Archbishop of Tarsus, Visitor Apostolic to the East Indies

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TO THE SACRED MEMORY OF THE
HOLY PONTIFF

PIUS X

WHO STRONGLY AND SWEETLY INVITED
ALL CATHOLICS TO THE FREQUENT
RECEPTION OF THE

SACRAMENT OF LOVE

ADD. 3969.

FOREWORD

TO MAKE Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist better known and loved is the object of this little book, composed at the request of friends "in transitu aquae" and "in angustia temporis." A revival of devotion toward this august Sacrament has been witnessed of late in the Church, owing principally to the impulse given in this direction by the saintly pontiff Pius X. But this devotion, to be lasting, must be based upon a corresponding instruction which perhaps is not always sufficiently imparted, especially in our Catholic colleges of both sexes.

The author, in this volume, has endeavored to condense in thirty considerations all the pith and marrow of Catholic theology on this subject, adapting his explanations of this mystery to the capacity of an ordinary cul-

tured mind and divesting them of such subtle questions as are more adapted to the school debate than to move the affections of the heart.

It has also been thought advisable to add to each consideration appropriate examples which go to show how Divine Providence, in the course of ages, has been pleased to sanction, by miraculous interferences, the faith of Catholics in the Real Presence. These examples are drawn, for the greater part, from Fr. Eugène Couet's book *Les Miracles Historiques du Saint Sacrement.* The sources from which the other examples are drawn are indicated after each.

May the august Sacrament of the Altar, the pledge of God's lasting love for us, which contains in itself all grace and all sweetness, be our strength in this life's warfare, our solace in adversity, our comfort in the last combat, that we may behold in heaven that same Jesus whom we lovingly adore under the eucharistic veil on our altars.

DECLARATION

In conformity with the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, we declare that we do not intend to attribute any more than human faith to the extraordinary facts herein related, while we submit all that is said here to the judgment of Holy Church, whose obedient son we wish ever to remain.

A. H. M. LEPICIER, O.S.M.
Archbishop of Tarsus and
Visitor Apostolic to the East Indies

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THE MYSTERY OF LOVE

FIRST DAY

THE BLESSED EUCHARIST, A LASTING TOKEN OF GOD'S LOVE TOWARD MANKIND

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love."[1]

THE creation of the world was an act of pure love on the part of God. This sovereign Lord of all had no need of any outward object to make Him perfectly happy, as He is Himself the fountainhead of all blessedness. It was through sheer goodness that He drew all creatures out of nothing. He wished to make them partake, each in its own limited degree, in His perfection and His unfathomable happiness.

Among all creatures, however, those endowed with reason call for a special share of God's bounty, as they alone are capable of knowing their Maker and corresponding to

[1] Jer. xxxi. 3.

His love. These are angels and men who were made to the image and likeness of their Creator and were endowed by Him from the beginning with supernatural grace, which enabled them to know and love Him in His own self and to partake of His own happiness in heaven.

Unfortunately, both angels and men offended God grievously in the beginning by an act of open rebellion against His Will. There was, however, this difference, that whereas only a limited number of angelic spirits proved unfaithful to their Maker, the whole of mankind inherited the sin of its head. Hence all men incur God's anger and all would equally be condemned to eternal death, were it not for the goodness of God, who decreed to save mankind and restore it both to its original dignity and to that state of blessedness for which it had first been created.

Oh, how we should be thankful to our heavenly Father, for having thus deigned to

redeem us from the bondage of sin and restore us to the dignity of sons and heirs of paradise!

* * *

The means ordered by God to cleanse mankind from the stain of sin and restore it to its original dignity, was to send His own Son, infinite and eternal as He Himself is, on earth, in order that, taking our nature, He might become true man, even as we are, and save us by assuming the debt due for our sins.

And thus it was that the Word was made Flesh by taking our human nature from the most pure and holy Virgin, He dwelt among us, toiling and suffering as we do, spending His earthly life in doing good, and praying His heavenly Father for the salvation of mankind.

But as it was decreed that the world should not be redeemed except by the shedding of the blood of the God-Man and His death on

the cross, so the Word Incarnate willingly submitted to that ordeal of affliction and torment which culminated with His bitter passion and death of the cross.

This was the great sacrifice of atonement in which the Victim was none less than the true and eternal Son of God, who offered himself freely and most willingly to His Father, to appease His just wrath by paying off all our debt. And this sacrifice was so pleasing in the eyes of God that He not only reconciled mankind to Himself, but also was willing to restore us to that state of grace and eternal blessedness which we had lost by sin.

As to the Saviour Himself, God, in virtue of His merits, raised Him from the dead and exalted Him, giving Him a name which is above all names, the sweet and adorable name of Jesus Christ, a name terrible to the powers of hell, whose might He overthrew and whose chief He crushed under His heel; a name adored by angels, loved and reverenced by all who partake of the plentiful redemption

which He brought to the world. "In the name of Jesus let every knee bend."[2]

* * *

The incarnation of the Word, His bitter passion, the sacrifice He offered for us on the cross, together with His glorious resurrection, took place at the time appointed by Divine Providence, "in the midst of the years," as the Prophet has it.[3]

But as these mysteries were ordained for the salvation of all mankind, it was necessary that they should embrace all times, that is from the beginning until the last day of the world, yet in a different manner.

For the generations which preceded the advent of Christ, these mysteries were set forth not only in the prophecies, but also in the lives of some of the most conspicuous personages of the Old Testament. Thus was the life, passion and death of Christ typified in Abel, in Isaac, in Jeremias, and in other Pat-

[2] Phil. ii. 10. [3] Hab. iii. 2.

riarchs or saintly men of the Old Dispensation.

But for the generations which came after Christ, a most stupendous means was devised by God to keep alive among men both the memory and working of those great mysteries. This means was the institution of a sacrament of the Church, in which that very same Jesus Christ who gave His life for us, not only should abide with us until the end of time, but also should perpetuate the offering He made of Himself on the cross; nay, more, should give His body and blood to us as food and drink, thus making each one of us partake of the copious redemption which He procured for us on the cross.

This is the sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist, in which Our Lord Jesus Christ is really present under the species of bread and wine, in which also the memory of His passion is ever recalled to our minds, abundant graces are imparted to us, and a pledge is given us of future glory.

The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is therefore a token of God's love toward mankind; it is a lasting pledge of our reconciliation with the Godhead; the heavenly rainbow set by our Father in heaven, to assure us that He has forgiven His erring children and now presses them to His bosom.

We thank Thee, now and forever, O God of mercy, for having thus instituted the Holy Eucharist, by which Thou ever dwellest among us. Grant, we beseech Thee, that we may always live in the remembrance of Thy tender mercies offered us in this Thy Sacrament of love.

Example

INSTITUTION OF THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

God often makes use of the weakest instruments to accomplish His greatest and most important designs.

There lived in the thirteenth century at Mont Cornillon, near Liège, a humble and saintly nun called Juliana, who had conse-

crated herself to God under the rule of St. Augustine. One night, as she was occupied contemplating the Sacrament of love, she suddenly saw, as if present before her eyes, the globe of the moon shining with a soft and resplendent light, except for a little portion in the shape of a dark line which marred its beauty.

Juliana thought this at first to be an illusion either of nature or of the evil one. But as the vision repeatedly disclosed itself to her eyes, she prayed God to illumine her as to the meaning of such an extraordinary apparition. As last Our Lord deigned to reveal to her that the resplendent disc of the moon represented the mystical cycle of the Christian year, and the stain which tarnished its beauty signified the absence of a solemn festival to honor the most sacred body of Jesus Christ present in the Sacrament of the Altar. In the meantime she was given to understand that she was the instrument chosen by God to establish this feast in the Church.

Juliana, conscious of Our Lord's will, began by consulting on this subject the most renowned theologians of the time, among them James Pantaléon, Archdeacon of Liège, who later became pope under the name of Urban IV. These learned men were all agreed that it would be well to establish in the Church a special festival destined to honor in a more solemn manner the august Sacrament of the Altar.

Juliana, animated by such authoritative advice caused an Office to be composed in honor of the Blessed Sacrament, and in several places this Office began to be recited with the approval of the respective bishops. However, she died before it was extended to the Universal Church, for this took place only in the year 1360, under Pope Clement IV.

SECOND DAY

THE INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE BLESSED EUCHARIST FORETOLD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

"In the figure contemplated,
'Twas with Isaac immolated,
By the Lamb 'twas antedated
In the Manna it was known."[1]

WHENEVER God is disposed to bestow some great benefit upon mankind, He is wont to announce it beforehand in order to prepare the minds of men to receive His gift with greater reverence and profit. Thus the incarnation of Christ our Saviour, and the foundation of the Church, the ark of salvation, were foretold in the Old Law by many figures and prophecies calculated to lead an upright mind to the clear knowledge of these truths.

No less explicitly was the institution of the most Blessed Eucharist foretold in the writings of the prophets and foreshadowed in

[1] Hymn *Lauda Sion*, Translation by MSGR. HENRY.

some special symbols of the Ancient Testament.

To begin with the prophets, the holy King David, rapt in spirit, thus sang[2]: "The Lord ruleth me and I shall want nothing: He hath set me in a place of pastures: He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment." Likewise in Zachary we read[3]: "For what is the good thing of Him, and what His beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect, and wine springing forth virgins?" More clearly yet do we read in Malachy[4]: "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation."

Thus have the prophets foretold the great mystery of love which was to link together Heaven and earth in the most august sacrament of the Eucharist.

* * *

[2] Ps. xxii. 1-2.
[3] ix. 17.
[4] i. 11.

The Blessed Eucharist is both the one great sacrifice of the New Law and a most excellent sacrament instituted by Christ for our sanctification, and under both aspects it was foreshadowed in various figures of the Old Dispensation. The recalling of some of these figures serves wonderfully to excite our faith and love toward this great mystery.

As a sacrifice, the Holy Eucharist was foreshadowed principally in the offering of Isaac and in the yearly immolation of the paschal lamb.

We read of Abraham that God ordered him to take his only-begotten son, whom he tenderly loved, Isaac, and offer him in holocaust upon a mountain. In compliance with God's will, though with a bleeding heart, the holy Patriarch took his son and on arriving in the place the Lord had shown him, bound him and put him on the altar he had erected. He would indeed have slain him had not an angel forbidden him to do so.[5]

[5] Gen. xxii.

Here, then, we have an image of our heavenly Father who, in order to save mankind, did not spare His only-begotten Son, but delivered Him up to death as a victim of propitiation for our sins. And Jesus Christ, like Isaac of old, made no resistance, but offered himself freely to death to appease His Father's anger. Moreover, He instituted the holy sacrifice of the Mass, in order that His own immolation might be represented, commemorated and applied to the end of time, for the salvation of the whole world.

As a sign that the sacrifice of the cross was to be perpetuated on our altars to the end of time, God had also ordered that the paschal Lamb should be slain every year at Easter-tide, and that it should be eaten in all the families of the children of Israel.

Now, Jesus Christ is indeed the *"Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"*[6]; he was led to the sacrifice "as a meek lamb

[6] John i. 29.

that is carried to be a victim"[7]; he is *"the unspotted and undefiled lamb,"*[8] *"the lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world."*[9]

O Jesus, true Lamb of God, who didst give Thy life for us on the cross, we bless Thee for having redeemed us, the sheep of Thy fold, and for renewing daily on our altars the fruit of Thy immolation for the salvation of the world.

How beautiful are the words of the apostle St. Andrew when, before giving his life for Christ, he thus addressed the tyrant who urged him to adore false gods: "I offer daily to God almighty, who is the only true God, not the flesh of oxen or the blood of goats, but the spotless Lamb on the altar; and this immolated Lamb remains entire and alive even after the whole congregation of the faithful has eaten the same."

* * *

The most Holy Eucharist is not only the

[7] Jer. xi. 19.
[8] 1 Pet. i. 19.
[9] Apoc. xiii. 8.

one great sacrifice of the New Law. It is also a most excellent sacrament instituted by Christ in order spiritually to nourish our souls and preserve in us the life of divine grace. As such it was foreshadowed in the manna, which was a heavenly food sent by God to the children of Israel during their forty years' pilgrimage from Egypt to the Promised Land.

As the desert could afford no nourishment for that great multitude, God, in His goodness, caused a mysterious food to fall from heaven, in the shape of a white morning dew "like unto the hoar frost on the ground."[10] Every morning the miracle was renewed, and the Jews were to collect the mysterious manna before sunrise, for it melted at the first rays of the sun. The quantity that was collected by each was equal in all cases, and such as would collect a greater share were found to have no more that the others. It could not be preserved for the next day, unless this were

[10] Ex. xvi. 14.

the Sabbath, no work being allowed on that day. The taste was that of fine flour mixed with honey,[11] but each could find in it that special taste which he might desire.

Thus, in the dreary desert of this life, where the world can afford no sufficient food for our souls, the infinite goodness of God prepares for us, every morning, in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, a most sweet banquet for the nourishment and refreshment of our souls, as long as our pilgrimage lasts here below.

This precious food is none other than the sacred body and blood of Christ, our Saviour, who, out of His infinite love for us, gives Himself equally to all, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, young and old, so that all may partake of the same food and drink and find therein the life of their souls.

This heavenly bread which has come down from heaven, has in itself "all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste"[12]; that is, it has the taste of all mysteries, according to the

[11] *Ibid.* 31.
[12] Wis. xvi. 20.

faith and devotion of the soul that partakes of it. Whether we represent to ourselves Jesus Christ with the grace of childhood, or in the opprobrium of His passion, or again in the glory of His resurrection, this admirable Sacrament rouses in our soul so many different delights as are the images under which we wish to contemplate our divine Saviour.

Thus also the fervent soul experiences, in this Sacrament, the sweetness of divine charity; those who are weak find in it a source of spiritual strength; the faithful moved by temptation, a remedy against the lust of the flesh; those desirous of a more spiritual life, the means to advance in the practice of humility, purity and patience.

Oh, may the purity of our conscience and the ardor of our devotion make us worthy often to receive the Holy Eucharist, this manna of the soul, "this good food,"[13] which will secure for us grace in this life and glory in the next.

[13] *Ibid.* xix. 20

Example

THE MIRACLE OF BOLSENA

It was in 1263. A priest from Germany was on his way to Rome when, passing through the little town of Bolsena, in Italy, he wished to say Mass in the old church St. Christina.

This priest had been tormented for some time by doubts on the real presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist and he had asked God to strengthen his faith in this august Sacrament. Now it happened that while he was performing the sacred rite, hardly had he pronounced the words of consecration, the Host suddenly took the color and shape of living flesh, except for that portion which the priest pressed in his fingers. In the meantime drops of thick blood were seen to ooze out of the Host, so that the corporal and even the altar slabs were bedewed with it. Thus was the priest's prayer answered and his faith in the divine Sacrament of the Altar greatly confirmed.

The fame of this miracle spread abroad. It reached the ears of the Pope, who was then staying at Bolsena, about six miles from the ancient town of Orvieto. The Pope was greatly moved. He deputed the Bishop of Orvieto to go and fetch the Host and the altar linen. He himself set out in solemn procession to meet the precious relics, surrounded by a large number of cardinals and dignitaries of the Pontifical Court.

The Pope who, when still archdeacon of Liège, had been the spiritual director of St. Juliana of Mont Cornillon, remembered how much this saintly nun had done to promote the institution of a feast in honor of the Most Blessed Sacrament. He then deputed two of the greatest theologians of the time, St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure, to investigate the miraculous event and compose an Office which might be recited by the Universal Church. It was then that, as tradition has it, while the two Saints were at the Pope's feet and St. Thomas was reading the Office

he had prepared, St. Bonaventure out of humility tore his own composition into pieces, deeming that of his dear brother St. Thomas superior to his own. The Office which the Angelic Doctor composed then is still now recited in the Universal Church on the feast of Corpus Christi and during the following octave.

THIRD DAY

THE DIFFERENT NAMES BY WHICH THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST IS DESIGNATED

"Thy name and Thy remembrance are the desire of the soul. My soul hath desired Thee in the night."[1]

THE Blessed Eucharist is such a sublime mystery that human language fails to find names adequate to express its infinite worth and wonderful effects. Hence, Holy Church has endeavored to supplement the deficiency of each name, by introducing a great variety of denominations by which the singular nature and supernatural properties of this august sacrament may be expressed in a fuller way. It is well to mention the principal among these names and often to call the attention of the mind to them, in order to excite in our souls a greater devotion toward this mystery of God's love.

[1] Is. xxvi. 8.

And, first of all, as this Sacrament is the greatest and most excellent among the seven sacraments of the Church, for this reason it is called, by antonomasia, the Blessed Sacrament, for it is to the Holy Eucharist that the other six sacraments are directed. Thus, Baptism cleanses man from original sin, and Penance from actual sin, in order to make him fit to worthily receive his Lord and Master in this sacred Banquet; Confirmation strengthens him in order that, in the midst of the temptations of this world, he may not fail in his fidelity to Christ; Extreme Unction prepares him to joyfully meet, at the judgment seat, that same Saviour who is contained under the species of bread and wine; Holy Orders confers upon the priest the power of consecrating and distributing the Holy Eucharist; finally, Matrimony has for its ultimate end to beget children of God who may partake in this life of this heavenly Bread and share with Christ in heaven eternal blessedness.

"Great Sacrament we Thee adore;
Oh, make us love Thee more and more."

* * *

The greatest boon of God to mankind is, after the Incarnation, the Most Blessed Sacrament by which Christ continues to abide with us to the end of time, giving us His body and blood for our food and drink. Hence this divine sacrament is properly called the "Blessed Eucharist," by which name is meant a gracious gift of God to man for his sanctification and salvation. It is truly the Sacrament of love and the mystery of divine charity, in which our heavenly Father has made "a remembrance of His wonderful works."[2] Indeed God, in this divine sacrament, renews daily in some way the wonders of creation by causing the body and blood of His Son to be present under the species of bread and wine. He renews the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves by making the same body of

[2] Ps. cx. 4.

Christ to be at one time, one and the same, on so many different altars.

This sacrament is also called "Eucharist" because it is for us an efficacious means of thanking God for all the benefits He has never ceased to confer upon us—for the life He has given us and which He maintains in us, for the supernatural helps and consolations with which He alleviates our misery and gladdens our earthly career, for the great glory to which He destines us in heaven.

It is for us a bounden duty to thank God for His benefits, and St. Paul warns us, "in all things to give thanks."[3] Now we can have no better means of fulfilling this duty than by offering to our heavenly Father this Most Holy Sacrament, which contains nothing less than the body and blood of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

* * *

As the Blessed Eucharist has been given us in order to be our spiritual food and drink

[3] Thess. v. 18.

and thus nourish and strengthen our souls; hence it is properly called the "Bread of Angels." Not that angels can partake of it as we do, for this sacrament was not instituted for them but for us only, and indeed during our present earthly journey. But because this bread is entirely celestial and is destined to raise man above his earthly nature, making him, as it were, akin to angelic substances. And as this heavenly bread is imparted to men in our churches, hence the Blessed Sacrament is also appropriately called the Holy Table.

Further, faith teaches us that in the Blessed Eucharist is contained truly the divine Person of our loving Saviour Jesus Christ Himself, the very same Christ who was born for us of the Blessed Virgin, who conversed on earth with His apostles, who died for us and now reigns triumphantly in paradise: that divine Redeemer, whose "delights are to be with the children of men."[4] Hence, this

[4] Prov. viii. 31.

Sacrament is also properly called "Emmanuel" that is, "God with us," God abiding with His creatures to the end of time, to be their companion in the great journey to Eternity, their friend who shares their joys and sorrows, who is their comforter in this valley of tears.

Oh! how we should admire and love our heavenly Father for having given us, in this Most Blessed Sacrament, such a wonderful token of His bounty and infinite greatness!

Example

MIRACULOUS CURE OF ST. GORGONIA, SISTER OF ST. GREGORY OF NAZIANZA

The illustrious Doctor St. Gregory of Nazianza, once Bishop of Constantinople, in the panegyrical oration which he wrote of his saintly sister Gorgonia, relates that she was once struck with mortal illness, so that medical men had lost all hope of saving her.

On hearing this, Gorgonia, full as she was of devotion toward the Blessed Eucharist,

got up in the middle of the night and went to the church. There, prostrate before the tabernacle in which Jesus Christ, through love of us, has taken his abode, represented to Him His immense kindness as well as the prodigies of His boundless charity. "Once," she said in accents of childlike faith, "a poor woman troubled with a cruel malady, touched the hem of Thy mantle and she was instantly cured. What, then, O Lord Jesus; is now Thy arm shortened? Will Thy whole sacred body have less efficacy than the hem of Thy garment? Thou, who wert moved at the voice of the poor Canaanean woman, wouldst Thou be less insensible to my prayer? Can it be that Thy goodness and Thy compassionating tenderness will no longer induce Thee to alleviate human suffering? Can it be that Thy infinite power, goodness, and love be now shortened? See, here am I, humbly prostrate at the feet of Thy inexhaustible mercy, in presence of this tabernacle, where, in the excess of Thy love for the children of men,

Thou hast established Thy dwelling. Now I make a vow that I will not go away from here until Thou hast cured me."

This fervent prayer, in which it is difficult to say which is more to be admired, the living faith or the fervent love, had hardly been furnished, than Gorgonia felt herself perfectly cured. The Blessed Eucharist had been the heavenly medicine which had restored her to her former state of health.

FOURTH DAY

THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES AS SET FORTH IN THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: and of His greatness there is no end."[1]

GOD created all things for His own greater glory; that is, for the outward manifestation of those divine attributes, which though they are but one with His Essence, are, however, conceived by us as means of obtaining a more perfect knowledge of His own incomprehensible Being. Among these attributes, four stand foremost; that is, Wisdom, Justice, Fortitude, and Goodness. Now, in no other work, if we except the Incarnation, do these divine attributes shine forth more conspicuously than in the Blessed Eucharist.

First of all, divine Wisdom is made manifest in this august Sacrament, inasmuch as here we have a work which only a divine

[1] Ps. cxliv. 3.

mind could conceive. The boldest speculations of science, the most fantastic creations of poetry, have failed to conceive even the possibility of a human body, the body of a Man-God, being made to be present simultaneously in so many places as there are consecrated hosts. Truly, here, we may say with the sacred text[2]: "Behold, God is great, exceeding our knowledge."

And thus, by devising this most wonderful of all miracles, God evidently shows Himself to be as He is in reality, that one great wise Maker of the universe who knows all the laws of His vast creation, as they all and each in reality depend upon His all-comprehending mind.

Oh let us adore that supremely wise Lord who, in the Blessed Sacrament, gives us such a striking proof of His infinite knowledge; and as it is by that same knowledge that He ordains all the circumstances of our lives, let us humbly submit to His fatherly guidance,

[2] Job xxxvi. 26.

humbly adoring the wise dispositions of His Wisdom in our regard.

* * *

As the Wisdom of God, so also His infinite Justice shines forth most wonderfully in the Holy Eucharist. God indeed is a debtor to no man; but the moment He has promised us some benefit, we may be certain that He will keep his word.

Now, our divine Saviour had promised His disciples that "He would be with them all days even to the consummation of the world."[3] Likewise, to the Jews, after He had fed them in the desert, He expressly said that He would give them a heavenly food and drink which would be nothing else but His own body and blood.

This divine promise Jesus made both as God and as man. As God, who has perfect power over the whole universe and whose command every creature is bound to obey. As man, in-

[3] Matt. xxviii. 20.

asmuch as His human nature is the instrument of the Godhead, which makes use of Him for the fulfillment of its eternal designs.

And now, our loving Saviour was indeed true to His twofold promise. First, by communicating to His beloved apostles and through them to all the priests of the Catholic Church, the power to change the bread and wine into His own body and blood, He secured for His Church a continuation of His real presence until the end of time; secondly, by ordaining that this wonderful change should take place under the species of those very elements which are ordained for the sustenance of our body, He supplied us with a spiritual banquet in which He Himself is our food and drink, and this for the whole of our mortal career. See, then, from this, how just God has been whilst proving true to the promises He had made to man.

As the wonderful change of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ supposes in Him who makes it, a perfect sway over the

elements of matter, hence God's infinite power is also manifested in this Sacrament, even more than when He created the world or when Christ Himself changed water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana.

Bless, O my soul, God's infinite justice and fortitude. Have perfect confidence in Him, for as He is infinitely wise, so also is He infinitely true to His promises and powerful in accomplishing them.

* * *

If the divine attributes of Wisdom, Justice and Strength shine forth in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, goodness is certainly that which more particularly is made manifest in this august mystery. Perfect goodness is not content with giving of its own, but it goes so far as to give its own self to the person it loves. Great indeed are the communications which God has made of Himself to man, but the Blessed Eucharist may justly be called the coping stone of all His bounties to us.

In the first place God communicated Himself to man when He gave him his being and formed him to His image and likeness, making him capable of knowing, loving and serving Him. Next, He gave man supernatural life; that is, a participation of Himself as He is one in nature and three in Person, illuminating His mind that he might know Him as He is in Himself and that he might love Him with his whole mind, with his whole heart, and with all the powers of his soul. But as this was not enough yet for the love of our heavenly Father, He gave us His own Son, who was made man like unto us, that through His passion and death He might become our Saviour.

But as this sweet Lord, Jesus Christ was to ascend to heaven after His resurrection, the great goodness of God would not leave us orphans here below, but, by a new miracle of His love He so disposed that the Saviour should remain with us in the Most Blessed Sacrament and that He should become the

food of our souls. Oh, we should indeed be thankful to such a gracious Lord for His tender mercies toward us.

Example

THE GILDED CIBORIUM OF PÉZILLA-DE-LA-RIVIÈRE

The following event goes to show how God is pleased, at times, to reward the pious care of the faithful for the Blessed Eucharist.

In 1793, when an atheistic government had driven from France the ministers of religion, had endeavored to blot out every vestige of the true Faith, it happened that in a small village of the diocese of Perpignan, named Pézilla-de-la-Rivière, after the parish church had been closed, there still remained in the tabernacle a few consecrated particles.

A saintly village girl, named Rose Llorens, knowing this, courageously asked the mayor of the place if he would allow her to bring these sacred particles to her home. Her request was granted, and Rose then enclosed

the Hosts in a crystal glass, which was the most beautiful vessel she could find in her poor house. The glass, which was then perfectly white, was placed in a cupboard scooped out of the wall, and the sacred species remained there hidden for seven years. They were made an object of worship not only on the part of the inmates of the house, but of strangers also, as often as the faithful could evade the malicious inquiry of the godless revolutionists.

When, at the end of 1800, the clergy were allowed to return to their parishes and the sacred particles were removed to the church, the bottom and the sides of the crystal vessel appeared beautifully gilded, a thing which caused universal admiration, as the vessel was known to have been previously perfectly white. The most wonderful thing about it was that no sign of artificial gilding could be traced, either inside or outside the vessel, the gold existing in the glass itself.

Thus it seems that Our Lord wished to re-

ward the simple faith and piety of those good souls who, in the days of infernal hatred against His Church, had proved true to the Sacrament of His love.

FIFTH DAY

INSTITUTION OF THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

"Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end."[1]

AS THE Blessed Eucharist is, after the Incarnation, the greatest pledge of God's love to man, so in the circumstances of the institution of this august Sacrament our divine Saviour multiplied the tokens of His love.

The first circumstance which enhances greatly our divine Lord's gift, consists in the fact of His instituting this sacrament shortly before He was to give His life for the salvation of the world. Parents, when about to leave this world, are wont to give their children special tokens of their love by consoling them and bequeathing to them what they hold most dear.

Now, Christ, our loving Saviour, knew full well, when He instituted at the Last Supper

[1] John xiii. 1.

the Blessed Eucharist, that His time had come to lay down His life for the world, and so, as St. John says[2] "having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

The institution of this Sacrament was the greatest token of love which He could give them, as it was nothing short of His own divine Person, His body and blood, His soul and divinity, and this for all ages to come. Thus did He console his beloved disciples by the promise of His perennial presence among them. Thus did He prove to them that "love is strong as death,"[3] for He knew, without the shadow of a doubt, that He would soon be unjustly betrayed by a disciple and slain by those very ones for whom He was dying. But nothing could deter Him from fulfilling His promise. Truly, the love of Christ for men was stronger and more far-reaching than the hatred of His enemies. They committed a great iniquity indeed by

[2] xiii. 1.
[3] Cant. viii. 6.

putting him to death; but He worked one of the greatest miracles of His omnipotence by remaining with them to benefit them forever.

* * *

God being all-powerful has no need of any creature to achieve the works of His hands. Yet He is wont to choose, out of His goodness, some rational creatures to whom He imparts His own power, and who act under Him and with Him as the instruments of His right hand. Thus He did with regard to the Blessed Eucharist. Though our divine Saviour might have once for all consecrated this Most Holy Sacrament, causing it to remain ever in His Church without it being necessary to repeat the act of consecration, yet He decreed to hand over this same power to His apostles and through them to all the priests ever to come, when he said: "Do this for a commemoration of Me."[4]

And so it was that this bountiful Lord, not content with giving His Church His body and

[4] Luke xxii. 19.

blood to be the food and drink of Catholics for all times to come, would also bequeath to all the future priests of the New Law, His own consecrating power. Hence, not only the apostles, but all their successors in the hierarchy, possess, with regard to the consecration of the Blessed Eucharist, the very same power which Christ Himself, possesses, so that, in this respect, we may truly say that every Catholic priest is another Christ, "Sacerdos alter Christus."

We should give thanks to Our Lord for such great bounty, and we should take the firm resolution to venerate the priestly character of His ministers even as we venerate His own priesthood.

* * *

The immense charity of Christ in instituting the Most Blessed Eucharist is set forth not only by the time which He chose for this great event; that is, the night previous to His death, and by the fact that He commissioned His apostles and priests to do the same that He

Himself had done but also of the clear knowledge which He had of His future abandonment on the part of all His disciples and even the betrayal which He was to suffer at the hands of one of them. This dismal vision, which disclosed to the eyes of the Saviour the inconstancy of human affection and the depth of ingratitude with which a beneficient friend may be treated, did not deter this sweet Lord from loving His disciples and creating them His priests forever. And not content with ordaining them priests of the New Law, He would also give them, with His own hands, His body and blood, thus making them partakers of His very life and being.

Neither did our loving Saviour foresee then only the inconstancy and ingratitude of His disciples; but embracing at one glance, with His all-comprehensive knowledge, all the generations to come, He clearly saw the unworthy treatment which He should have to bear, in the sacrament of His love, on the part both of godless men and lukewarm

Christians. And yet none of these considerations could deter Him from instituting this great sacrament.

It is good to dwell on these considerations of the circumstances which accompanied the institution of the Blessed Eucharist. Thus will the devout Catholic better appreciate the boundless love of Our Saviour in choosing to be with us in this Sacrament all days unto the consummation of the world.

Example

THE FAITH OF ST. LOUIS IX, KING OF FRANCE, IN THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

The saintly King of France, Louis IX, stands out in the line of monarchs as a striking instance of how a deepfelt piety can be favorably combined with the difficult art of ruling peoples. It is well known how decidedly impressed upon the youthful king's mind was the education imparted to him by his mother, Blanche de Castille. Those principles of Christian virtues which she in-

stilled into the young monarch's mind developed, as was to be expected, into a special devotion to the august Sacrament of the Altar, the fountain-head of all truly spiritual life.

Of him, his faithful biographer, the Sir of Joinville, relates the following[5]: "The holy King told me that several people of the Alby region came to the count of Montfort, who then guarded that territory for the King, and invited him to go to see the body of Our Lord which had appeared in blood and in flesh in the hands of the priest. But Montfort answered: 'Go ye to see it, who do not believe! For me, I firmly believe it exactly as Holy Church tells us regarding the Sacrament of the Altar.' "

A similar fact is by many writers attributed to St. Louis himself. Villani, in fact, relates[6] that as holy Mass was being offered in that splendid chapel which he had erected in order to place therein the holy crown of thorns, called the Sainte Chapelle, suddenly,

[5] Nat. de Wailly, Jean, Sir de Joinville, p. 31.
[6] Croniche Fiorentine, L. vi, chap. 67.

at the moment of the Elevation, Our Lord appeared in the Host under the shape of a wonderfully beautiful child. Some of the bystanders then ran to the King, inviting him to come to witness the miracle. But the King answered: "Let those go and see who do not believe in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament. For me, I never cease to ponder in my heart, reflecting upon such a great love. The sight of this prodigy would not strengthen my faith."

SIXTH DAY

THE BLESSED EUCHARIST, "JESUS WITH US"

"Stay with us, O Lord, because it is toward evening."[1]

GOD in the Old Dispensation had given to the Jews the Ark of the Covenant that it might abide with them as a token of His love in drawing them from the bondage of Egypt and leading them into the Promised Land. He had ordered Moses to place into it the manna, together with the tables of the law, that they might always remember, on the one side, the miraculous way in which they had been fed for forty years in the desert; and on the other, the commandments they had received from Him for their moral behavior.

In the New Law, however, God was not satisfied with endowing His Church with mere elements however holy these might be, nor with bequeathing to the faithful His holy Gospel. He willed further that His own

[1] Luke xxiv. 29.

divine Son should ever dwell in our tabernacles, that we might come to Him to seek consolation in our exile; that we might have recourse to Him in our needs; that, by seeing the Host in which He is really present, we might remember all that He taught us and all that He suffered for us; lastly, that we might offer Him, as to our supreme Lord, that worship which is due to His divine Majesty.

Truly the practise of virtue, under all its forms, is made easy for us, the moment Jesus, our best Friend, our loving God, our tender Lord and Master abides in the midst of us. By His presence among us, our beloved Emmanuel soothes our sorrows, encourages us to good, keeps vivid in us the memory of His teaching, and excites us to adore as is befitting God, our Maker, the Creator of heaven and earth.

* * *

Although God is present in all places and sees perfectly all our thoughts and desires, yet

the fact that He is a pure spirit so far above our understanding, makes it difficult for us to realize that He is near us and that we may converse friendly with Him. But the moment we know that our divine Lord Made Man dwells among us under the sacred eucharistic species, oh! what a consolation is ours seeing that He is as near us as He was when He conversed with His beloved apostles, and that we can approach Him even as when the crowds surrounded Him, hanging on His words and speaking friendly to Him.

Man is essentially a social being and nothing can prove more painful to our nature, than that we should be left alone. Isolation is the greatest trial which can befall a man; and to be friendless means to be cut away from the conversation of the living. Woe to him who has no one upon whose fidelity he can rely and into whose heart he can confide his troubles and pour the surplus of his chalice of sorrow.

Our divine Saviour, in His infinite charity,

would not leave us alone in this dreary world. He determined to abide for our sake in the tabernacles of our churches, although perhaps these may be at times very unworthy of His infinite dignity. But the foreknowledge of this lack of a convenient dwelling place upon this earth, could not deter Him from fulfilling His design of remaining with us forever, that we might ever be consoled by His presence and that we might have One to whom we might turn in case of need and trouble, a friendly Heart which might understand our wants and pour upon our wounds the balm of His heavenly consolation.

* * *

The sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist is for us a source of lasting consolation inasmuch as it secures to us the presence of Him who, whilst being God, is also man like to us, and who knows how to compassionate us in our infirmities. Besides that, this divine sacrament is to us a continual reminder of all that

Jesus did and suffered for us as also of His divine teaching. For, in the host, Jesus is that very same wonderful Child that was born of the Virgin Mary; that same wise Boy who astonished the doctors of the law in the temple; that same great Prophet who passed His life healing the sick, consoling the afflicted and doing good to all, teaching men the way to heaven; that same sweet Lamb of God, who laid down His life for the sins of the world. Oh! how profitable it is to the faithful man to kneel before the Most Blessed Sacrament and to reflect upon the different aspects of that divine Saviour who is there really present, though hidden under the sacred species!

Lastily, in the Holy Eucharist we have an easy means of paying our dutiful homage to the divine Majesty. We are indeed bound to acknowledge God as our Maker and Supreme Master and as such to adore Him. Now, this duty is made easy for us when we realize that this same great Lord is there on our

altars at but a few steps from us, and that by adoring His sacrament, we give God Himself that adoration which is due to the Creator of the world.

Tantum ergo Sacramentum
Veneremur Cernui.

Example

PUNISHMENT INFLICTED BY GOD FOR PROFANING THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

There is no divine favor however great it may be, which may not be misused by ungrateful men, and it is not to be wondered at if heretics at all times have turned their hatred and vented their fury against this most precious of God's gifts.

St. Optatus, Bishop of Mileva, in Numidia, one of the most illustrious defenders of the Faith in the fourth century, stood up valiantly against the schism of the Donatists which was laying waste a portion of Africa and in particular the Church of Carthage. He thus

addresses those sectaries, who perpetrated all sorts of excesses in the churches: "What has Jesus Christ done to you that you should destroy the altars on which He reposes? Why do you break the sacred tables upon which He has taken His abode? You have imitated the crime of the Jews who put to death the Saviour on the cross, for you ill-treat Him on the altar. Moreover, you have consummated your sacriliges by breaking the chalices which contained the blood of the Lord. You have melted them in order to sell them on the public squares. Oh! unheard of impiety!

"Your Bishops," continues St. Optatus, "have pushed their fury further. They have ordered the Blessed Eucharist itself to be thrown to the dogs. But God could not bear such horrors any longer. These animals, becoming suddenly enraged, pounced upon their masters as upon unknown malefactors. Neither was it possible to appease them by caresses. They continued to treat them as enemies and, biting them ferociously, they

would pull them to pieces, thus avenging the injuries which had been done to the Holy Eucharist."[2]

[2] De Schismate Donatistarum, 11, II, VI.

SEVENTH DAY

TRANSUBSTANTIATION, ONE OF THE GREATEST OF GOD'S MIRACLES

"What though sense no change discerns?
Only be the heart in earnest,
Faith her lesson quickly learns."[1]

As God is the creator and supreme Lord of the whole universe, we can have no difficulty in believing that He can produce stupendous effects beyond and above the ordinary course of nature, which is, in His hands, a perfectly docile instrument. Hence God can work miracles, which are effects surpassing all the forces of the universe, and in His infinite bounty He does work such extraordinary effects not infrequently for the good of mankind. We should not wonder, then, that as He loves us with an everlasting love, He should have disposed that the bread

[1] Hymn *Pange Lingua,* Translation by Fr. Caswall.

and wine at the words of consecration, become the true body and blood of our divine Lord Jesus Christ.

This loving Saviour had already given a proof of His boundless power over the elements of nature when, at the marriage feast of Cana, at the prayer of His most saintly Mother, He changed the water into wine. In the Blessed Eucharist, however, a few greater miracles take place, for bread and wine are not changed into a new substance, but into a substance already existing; that is, into the real body of Jesus Christ, the same body which is now in heaven and which may already be present in many churches and on many altars. And this miracle of miracles is precisely that which is called "Transubstantiation," such a unique change of the whole substance as has no parallel in the whole of creation.

How consoling it is to reflect that our heavenly Father, who is so great and possesses such a sway over the whole of creation, makes

use of His infinite might only to benefit us. We should thank Him and, in answer for such goodness, propose to use our powers only to serve Him and promote His glory.

* * *

The mystery of Transubstantiation does not mean only the direct change of the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of our divine Saviour. It implies also the persistence of the species, or accidents, of bread and wine after the consecration. These species are called "sacred," because they constitute, together with the body and blood of Christ, the most august Sacrament of the Altar.

Our Lord could certainly have given us, in the Blessed Eucharist, His body under its own natural shape and color; but we should have felt a kind of repulsion had we to receive Him in His own visible form. He, therefore, condescended to our weakness, when offering Himself to us to be our food and drink under the species of those very elements which, in

the order of nature, have been instituted to nourish us and to quench our thirst. Thus this divine Lord shows Himself to be what He has ever been, a kind Father who not only gives good gifts to His children, but also gives them in the way which may benefit them best.

Moreover, by ordaining that the species or accidents of bread and wine should remain after the consecration, Our Lord meant to provide for the exercise of our faith, which has for its object invisible things. Though the eyes after the consecration see nothing but bread and wine, yet, as Christ has said, "This is My body, this is My blood," and His word cannot prove false, so we firmly believe that in the Blessed Eucharist there is contained truly, really, and substantially the body and blood of our divine Saviour.

Thus it is, that this august Sacrament is not only the nourishment and drink of our souls, but we also have in it the best opportunity for exercising the virtue of faith, with-

out which "it is impossible to please God."[2]

* * *

The mystery of Transubstantiation teaches us a two-fold most important lesson.

First, from the fact that the elements of bread and wine are converted into the body and blood of our divine Saviour, we are reminded how we should strive to transform ourselves into the very likeness of Christ, who is Himself "the brightness of the glory and the figure of the substance"[3] of the Father. Indeed, this is the main object for which the Blessed Eucharist was instituted; namely, that by worthily receiving this august Sacrament, we may be brought little by little to express in us those perfections and that mode of life which are proper to our divine Redeemer. As Transubstantiation is the work of divine power, so this transformation must be the work of that grace which comes abundantly to us through the worthy reception of this most divine Sacrament.

[2] Heb. xi. 6.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 3.

Another most important lesson is that of the great work which is accomplished in the soul by the practise of a hidden or interior life. Though our divine Saviour is really present in the Blessed Sacrament, yet the sacred species hide Him from our eyes in such a way that the consecrated bread does not differ outwardly from ordinary bread. And yet Christ is as really present under the species of bread and wine as He is present in heaven. His life in the tabernacle, is the very same as the life which He leads in heaven. There He has the same thoughts, the same wishes, the same infinite blessedness which, as man, He possesses in the bosom of His Father.

Thus should we endeavor to cultivate in us that spirit of interior life which the world does not know of and consequently does not appreciate, but which alone is pleasing to God and consists in a constant, loving, and familiar intercourse with the Spouse of our hearts, the Holy Ghost.

Example

THE MASS OF POPE ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

It is related in the life of St. Gregory the Great, that as he was one day celebrating Mass in the Basilica of St. Peter's in Rome, a Roman lady presented herself with the rest of the faithful in order to receive holy communion from him. However, when the holy Pontiff pronounced the accustomed words: "May the body of Our Lord Jesus Christ keep your soul unto life eternal," this woman began to smile with an air of incredulity.

Seeing this, Gregory withdrew from her the eucharistic Bread and entrusted the deacon to bring it back to the altar and keep it there until the communion of the faithful should be completed. Afterward, he thus addressed the lady: "Tell me, what thought went through your mind when, on the point of receiving communion, you began to laugh?" To this the woman answered: "The small loaf which you presented to me was precisely the same which I brought myself to

the oblation. I could not help smiling when I heard you give the name of 'body of Jesus Christ' to a loaf which I myself had made with my own hands."

The holy Pontiff was grieved. Turning to the people he asked them to unite their prayers to those of the clergy to obtain from God that He would dispel the cloud of unbelief from the mind of the haughty lady.

At that moment, the Host, which had been replaced upon the altar, changed its appearance. Instead of bread, a piece of bleeding flesh was seen by all present including the incredulous woman, who yielding to evidence and in a state of indescribable emotion, acknowledged the Real Presence of the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the consecrated bread.

EIGHTH DAY

JESUS CHRIST IS WHOLE AND ENTIRE IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

"Whoso eateth It can never
Break the Body, rend or sever;
Christ entire our hearts doth fill."[1]

IF WE would duly realize what great gift God has made us by instituting the sacrament of the Eucharist we should remember how our divine Lord is here present not only with His true body and true blood, but also with His most holy soul, and with His divinity.

First of all, the body of Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist is that very same which was born of the Virgin Mary, that same immaculate flesh which suffered for us during the bitter passion of the Saviour and finally was immolated for us upon the cross.

"Hail, true Body, truly born
Of the Virgin Mary mild,

[1] Hymn *Lauda Sion*, Translation by MSGR. HENRY.

Truly offered, racked and torn,
On the Cross, for man defiled."[2]

The blood of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist, is that most pure blood, the price of our redemption, which flowed in the veins of the Saviour, which He shed abundantly in Gethsemani, at the scourging pillar, when crowned with thorns and nailed to the cross; that same blood which gushed forth from His side when the soldier pierced it with a lance.

Besides the body and blood of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist, there is also His most holy soul, which was infused into His body at the moment of His conception; that soul full of grace, wisdom and truth; that loving soul that lived only for our good, whose sentiments were all sympathy and affection for us.

Lastly, we have in the Blessed Eucharist the divinity or Godhead of Christ, by which He is one in nature with the Father and the Holy Ghost, true God, even as He is true man.

[2] Hymn *Ave Verum*, Translation by Rev. Edward F. Garesché, S.J.

So, therefore, the Blessed Eucharist is really Heaven upon earth or rather it is Heaven joined to earth, as the Divine Nature and the human nature are closely connected together in the hypostatic union, forming the one undivided person of Jesus Christ, really present under the sacramental species.

"Of a pure and spotless Virgin
Born for us on earth below."[3]

* * *

True faith in the blessed Sacrament of the Altar not only demands that we should firmly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is whole and entire in the host, that is, with His body, blood, soul, and divinity; but it also requires that we should believe that He is whole and entire under each separate species, that is, under the species of bread and under the species of wine.

In force of the words of consecration, the bread is changed directly into the body of Jesus Christ, and the wine into His blood.

[3] Hymn *Pange Lingua,* Translation by Fr. Caswall.

But as a body, to be a human living body, must be permeated by blood and, moreover, informed by a rational soul in the same manner that blood, to be living human blood, must fill the veins of a human body and be informed by a human soul; so, by concomitance, under the species of bread after the consecration we also have the body and soul of Jesus Christ, and under the species of wine we have the body and soul of Christ.

Moreover, as the divine Person of the Word at the moment of the Incarnation, assumed hypostatically both the body and blood of Christ, and what the Word has once assumed, He never relinquishes, hence under both species the Godhead is also present.

From this we see how wonderful are the workings of God, when it is a question of benefiting mankind. Oh! great indeed should be our correspondence to such loving kindness, and specially we should often repeat:—

"Down in adoration falling,
Lo! the sacred Host we hail!"[4]

Another mystery connected with the indivisibility of Christ's sacred Person in the Blessed Eucharist consists in the fact that when the sacred host is being divided by the priest, the body of Our Saviour is not thereby divided, but Christ is whole and entire under each resulting portion, even if these should be innumerable. This follows from the fact that our divine Lord is present under the species of bread and wine in the manner in which a determined substance is present under its accidents. Thus, the substance of bread before the consecration, is everywhere present in the host; and as through transubstantiation all the substance of bread is changed into all the substance of Christ, hence our divine Lord is really and wholly present in the whole of the host and in every portion thereof. So therefore when a consecrated particle is divided among several communicants, each re-

[4] Hymn *Pange Lingua*, Translation by Fr. Caswall.

ceives as much as is received by him who receives an entire host.

"When at last the Bread is broken,
Doubt not what the Lord hath spoken:
In each part the same love-token,
The same Christ, our hearts adore."[5]

These consoling considerations lead us to reflect that as Christ in the Blessed Eucharist cannot be divided, so our love for Him and our allegiance should be whole and entire. That is, we should not be content with rendering him the homage of our mind by believing firmly in this great mystery; neither should we satisfy ourselves with offering to Him our bodily adoration. But we should give Him also all the undivided affection of our hearts, not allowing us to love any creature whatever except through Him, with Him and in Him.

[5] Hymn *Lauda Sion*, Translation by MSGR. HENRY.

Example

conversion of an incredulous anchoret

We read in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert (De Vitis Patrum, L. V. Libell. 18) that one of them was once tormented by violent doubts concerning the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist. He went even so far as to say that the bread which is received at communion is not the body of Christ, but only its figure.

These words greatly scandalized his brethren. Two of them immediately came to him entreating him not to depart from the teaching of the Church that the bread is truly changed into Christ's body and the wine into His blood. All their exhortations however, could not move the unfortunate Religious, who even presumed to say as Thomas, the apostle: "If I do not see what you say with my own eyes, I will not believe." At these words the two brethren were greatly grieved and began to pray, asking God to illumine the poor anchoret. Now, as his obstinacy sprang

rather from a weakness of mind than from a proud heart, it pleased God to enlighten him through an extraordinary occurrence.

The following Sunday as the three elderly men were assisting together at the sacrifice of the Mass in the church, and the priest had already arrived at the words of consecration, they beheld a little child lying on the altar. Later, when the celebrant divided the sacred host into two portions, an angel appeared with a sword in his hand, in the act of immolating the little child, whose blood was received into the chalice. At last, when the priest divided the portion of the host destined for the communion of the faithful, the same angel was seen dividing the child's flesh into as many parts.

It was the custom, at that time, to give the communicant in his hands the portion of the host destined for his communion. As, then, the anchoret approached the Holy Table thus to partake of the Victim, he visibly received in his hand a portion of this bloody

flesh, at which sight all his objections vanished away and he exclaimed, "I believe, O Lord, that this bread is truly Thy body and this wine truly Thy blood." Meanwhile the portion which he held in his hands took again the aspect of bread and he received it, giving thanks to God.

Thus did our merciful Lord teach this too simple anchoret the great truth that our divine Saviour hid Himself under the sacramental veil precisely in order to facilitate our eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood.

NINTH DAY

THE BLESSED EUCHARIST, THE MOST EXCELLENT OF ALL THE SACRAMENTS OF THE NEW LAW

"Down in adoration falling
Lo! the Sacred Host we hail."[1]

IF WE should wish to form a due estimate of the great work of the Sacrament of the Altar, we should compare it not only with the sacraments of the Old Law, but also with those of the New Dispensation.

First of all, as regards the sacraments of the Old Law, the Blessed Eucharist is far superior to them, since it contains in a most excellent manner the grace which it signifies, a thing which the sacraments of the Old Law could not do, since they were only symbols of grace or, as St. Paul says, "weak and needy elements"[2] which could not justify those that received them.

But also as compared with the sacraments

[1] Hymn *Pange Lingua*, Translation by FR. CASWALL.
[2] Gal. iv. 9.

of the New Dispensation, the Blessed Eucharist is found to excel them all in dignity and efficacy. For, the other sacraments being sacred rites instituted by Christ for the sanctification of men are but as so many rivulets of divine grace starting from the Sacred Heart of our divine Saviour for the sanctification of mankind. In the Blessed Eucharist, on the other hand, we have the very fountain-head of all graces, Jesus Christ Himself, our God, our Saviour and our all. And so the Blessed Eucharist stands to the other sacraments even as the immense ocean stands to the rivers whose waters irrigate only the countries through which they pass and which at last go back to the ocean from which they originally were formed.

In the Blessed Eucharist, therefore, from the fact that under the species of bread and wine, the sacred person of Christ, the cause of all our sanctification, is contained, we really possess the source of all graces and the fountain-head of all salvation. Hence it

is that the Blessed Eucharist is called by the general name "Sacrament" or "Most Holy Sacrament," as if embodying in itself the perfections of all the other sacraments. Hence, also, our divine Lord Himself, who did not receive any of the other sacraments, received this in the Last Supper, He Himself the gift and the giver, He Himself the fountain-head of all sanctification. This is why the priest, when consecrating this sacrament, does not use his own words, but the words of Christ, to show that in this sacrament is contained the fulness of the grace of the Saviour.

* * *

Beautiful indeed is the remark of a pious author that, whereas God is infinitely wise, He could not devise to impart to us a greater boon; whereas He is infinitely good, He could not find a greater gift with which to enrich us; whereas He is most powerful, He could not produce anything better than the Blessed Eucharist.

The Blessed Eucharist is the most excellent of all the sacraments of the New Law, not only because it contains Jesus Christ Himself, who is true God and true man, but also because it imparts to those who receive it worthily a most abundant share of divine grace. Grace is that heavenly gift which makes our souls similar to God, resplendent with divine light, an object of complacency in the eyes of the Almighty.

Now, indeed, the grace with which the Blessed Eucharist adorns the soul is not essentially different from the grace given by the other sacraments. But, besides being more abundant, it has for its special effect to raise the soul above earthly things, making it more supernatural, more similar to Him who is essentially a pure Spirit.

Indeed, the greatest obstacle to the development of spiritual life in us is our body, which, with its animal instincts and base inclinations, oftentimes drags the soul after itself, preventing it from soaring to a higher

aspiration and a closer union with God. This precisely made the apostle St. Paul exclaim: "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"[3]

Now, the Blessed Eucharist, by containing in itself such a spiritual and divine food as is the sacred body and blood of Christ, achieves the work of purifying and sanctifying our souls, elevating them above the imperfections of sinful flesh and making them worthy to commune, in a strain of mutual love, with the thrice holy God.

* * *

As the Blessed Eucharist is the most excellent of all the sacraments of the New Law, so is it also the most profitable to us by reason of the frequency with which we may receive it. Some of the sacraments can be received only once in life, as Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders; others can be received several times, but only on certain conditions, as Matrimony and Extreme Unc-

[3] Rom. vii. 24.

tion; but this sacrament, together with that of Penance, can be received as frequently as the Catholic desires.

The sacrament of Penance indeed is a necessary preliminary to reception of the Blessed Eucharist for those who have committed mortal sin; but it is likewise a convenient preparation for such as are not aware of such mortal faults, though for a person who is in a state of grace it is not necessary to go to confession every time he wishes to receive the sacred body and blood of Our Lord.

Jesus Christ in His infinite goodness has put no limit to the reception of this sacrament. Holy Church, the interpreter of His will, exhorts the faithful to daily approach the Holy Table so that their lives may truly be eucharistic lives. For, by receiving frequently this divine food, it cannot be but that the soul becomes heavenly—heavenly in its thoughts, heavenly in its affections and tendencies, heavenly in its operations. Thus may be verified in the Catholic the saying of

St. Paul: "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me."[4]

Example

St. Hugh of Lincoln and the Blessed Eucharist

St. Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, who lived at the end of the twelfth century, was once about to celebrate holy Mass in one of his villas, when the monks of a neighboring Abbey brought him most costly vestments for the use of the sacrifice together with a chalice of great value requesting that he would bless them according to liturgical rite.

The Saint, who was particularly keen on the honor of the house of God, but could not bear the behavior of some of the clergy who allowed the house of God to be kept in poverty and want while their houses were lavishly furnished, took occasion of this fact to praise publicly the piety of the monks and to condemn the vanity of those churchmen who would rather enrich their own dwell-

[4] Gal. ii. 20.

ings than think of providing for the honor of divine worship.

God showed how much this zeal of the saintly prelate pleased Him. For, as St. Hugh proceeded to say Mass and had already pronounced the words of consecration, there was seen in his hands, instead of the host, a little Child radiating light and of incomparable sweetness, which stretched out its own tiny hands toward Heaven, as if offering Himself to God for the salvation of the world.

The same wonder was repeated twice again at the same Mass. The first time when the Bishop raised the host over the chalice to break it, and secondly at the time of communion. This is the reason why St. Hugh of Lincoln is usually represented bearing in his hands a chalice over which is a little child surrounded with luminous rays.

TENTH DAY

WORSHIP DUE TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

"Sing His glory without measure,
For the merit of your Treasure
Never shall your praises fill."[1]

FROM the fact that the Most Blessed Eucharist contains really, truly, and substantially the adorable person of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, as the holy Council of Trent teaches, it follows that we are bound to bestow on that divine Sacrament those same tokens of worship which we should bestow on Our Lord Himself if He came again visibly into this world.

Indeed, that it is God's will that we should worship the Holy Eucharist with the same inward and outward signs of adoration with which we worship the Deity itself is the explicit teaching of the Church, which is so jealous of the honor due to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, that she has never ceased

[1] Hymn *Lauda Sion*, Translation by MSGR. HENRY.

to promote and to encourage these outward tokens of reverential worship.

God Himself has oftentimes expressed His will in this respect, while working numberless miracles in proof of the lawfulness of this worship. At times He has been pleased to favor the pious worshipers with wonderful apparitions, as when a radiant child was seen in the hands of the priest in the place of the host, or the consecrated bread took the form of Christ crucified. At other times God Himself has been seen to strike with severe punishment or even sudden death those who either profane this august Sacrament or presume to deny the real presence of Christ under the sacred species.

Now, with reference to the divine worship bestowed upon this Most Holy Sacrament, it is well to observe that though the sacred species are not in reality the person of Our Lord Who, as we know, is hidden under these species, yet do they well share the homage and adoration directed to Our Lord Himself, be-

cause they are, as it were, signs of His presence upon our altars.

Happy the faithful Catholic who, adding action to his faith, strives with his whole heart to reverence and adore the blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

* * *

Our worship of the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist should be both inward and outward.

We should first adore Our Saviour hidden under the sacred species, by protesting our faith in His divinity and submitting to Him, as to our supreme Maker, our hearts, our lives, and all the faculties of our soul. To do this, it is not necessary to repair actually to the Church where the Blessed Sacrament is preserved. It is enough that we should betake ourselves in spirit where there is a consecrated Host and that we should pay our homage of reverence and adoration from the bottom of our hearts to our divine Lord hidden under the sacred species, saying, for in-

stance: "I adore Thee every moment, O my divine Saviour, who art really present in the Holy Eucharist. I consecrate to Thee my heart, my body, my soul, nay my whole self: grant that I may serve Thee forever and die in Thy love."

Such frequent inward adoration of the Blessed Eucharist is one of the most efficacious means to keep alive in us the precious gift of the interior spirit which is so pleasing in the eyes of God. The secret of the spiritual life consists precisely in this interior spirit, when the soul communes in a friendly manner with its spiritual Spouse, who is the Holy Ghost, and familiarly converses with Him. Now, what can bring the soul nearer to God than the thought and interior adoration of that wonderful gift which is the Blessed Eucharist, truly called the "Sacrament of divine love"? This very act of inward worship, accompanied with the desire of receiving this august Sacrament, is in itself an efficacious means of assuring to

us the fruit of the Incarnation, of which it is as the continuation upon earth.

* * *

Although Our Lord is invisibly present in the Blessed Eucharist, yet He is there as in a sacrament; that is, as in an outward sign of sanctifying grace. Hence it is, on our part, a strict duty to worship this august Sacrament not only by the inward acts of the soul, but also by outward signs of adoration. Of these outward signs some consist in personal acts, such as prostrations and genuflections, the same as we are wont to give to God Himself. To this kind of worship belong also processions in which the Sacred Host is carried in public to testify the supreme dominion of Our Lord over the whole world. The same signification also attaches to the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, when the Sacred Host is set upon a throne in a monstrance surrounded by rays of glory and when it is solemnly incensed, to testify that there

is really present the Lord of heaven and earth, to whom all honor and glory is due.

Other convenient signs of adoration of the Holy Eucharist consist in raising temples, altars, or tabernacles in its honor, in order that the dwelling place of the God of love hidden for us under the sacred species may be less unworthy of His infinite dignity. And, oh, how beautiful it is to see those glorious temples which, in course of time, have been raised to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament by the piety of the faithful throughout the world! Those splendid monuments which will always remain objects of the greatest admiration, testify to the great faith of past generations toward our eucharistic Lord and at the same time are a warning for future ages not to be less generous in bestowing signs of honor and veneration on Him who for our sakes chose to remain hidden in the august Sacrament of the Altar.

Example

ST. PETER OF VERONA AND THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

It is a well-known fact that evil spirits often present themselves as angels of light to deceive men and lead them to eternal perdition. The following fact is a proof of this and also serves to show what is the power of the Blessed Eucharist over the nefarious acts of demons.

It is related in the life of St. Peter of Verona, the great Dominican martyr who sealed his faith with his blood, that whilst engaged in his apostolic labors he was wont to receive hospitality in the house of a rich Catholic gentleman of Milan. Once, however, this man almost refused to welcome the Religious, alleging the fact that, having been of late in an assembly of Manicheans, the Blessed Virgin had appeared to him all resplendent with heavenly light, bearing her Son in her arms, and had forbidden him to give any longer shelter to that religious Peter who was, he had asserted, a sworn enemy of

Christ. The Mother of God had added that only the Manicheans are in possession of the truth and consequently she had insisted upon the nobleman's joining that sect, a thing which he had done already.

On hearing this, Peter said he would himself join the Manicheans if the Blessed Virgin should show herself to him in one of their meetings. The meeting, indeed, was convoked for the next day and meanwhile Peter passed the night in prayer.

The next day, at Mass, he consecrated an extra host and respectfully placing it in a pyx he kept hidden beneath his cloak. Thus armed, he went to the Manicheans' assembly. Shortly after his arrival, there appeared on the altar, through the evocation of the medium, a shining lady who began to reprove Peter for his obstinacy in following and upholding error, instead of opening his eyes to the truth which, she said, was to be found only among the Manicheans. But the Saint was not deceived by this fallacious apparition. Taking out

from under his cloak the consecrated host, he said to the shining phantasm: "If thou art truly the Mother of God, adore Thy Son." At these words, the apparition dissolved and vanished away as black smoke, leaving in the hall an unbearable stench. Christ present in the Blessed Eucharist had put to flight the enemy of mankind, the devil.[2]

[2] Acta Sanct. Bolland. t. III, April, p. 701.

ELEVENTH DAY

THE MEDIATION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD WITH REGARD TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

"Hail true Body, truly born
Of the Virgin Mary Mild."[1]

IT IS certainly out of sheer goodness that God decreed to give us His very Son Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist. But there is no doubt that in the execution of this design, He was pleased to admit the mediation of His most holy Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is our life, our sweetness, and our hope, and through whom all graces come to us from Our Lord. Indeed, that we owe to Our Lady's mediation the institution of this most precious Sacrament is a truth the consideration of which brings much consolation to the soul.

In the first place it may be said that our blessed Lady interceded with her Son that He would bestow upon us this most wonder-

[1] Hymn *Ave Verum*, Translation by Rev. Edward F. Garesché, S.J.

ful and consoling gift. Not that her prayers would change the course of Divine Providence; but as God in the effects which He produces in the world is pleased to admit the co-operation of His creatures, so He had ordained that the prayers of His beloved Mother should go toward preparing the execution of the design.

Our blessed Lady, then, as she was inwardly instructed by the Holy Spirit concerning the nature and the future institution of this divine Sacrament, entreated her Son to give to the world this pledge of His love, notwithstanding the unworthiness and the ingratitude of man. This she did when reciting that portion of the "Our Father" in which we say: "Give us this day our daily bread"; because what we ask for here is not only the material bread of the body, but also the spiritual bread of the soul and particularly that most excellent bread, which is the Bread of angels, the Most Blessed Eucharist.

Again, when at the marriage-feast of Cana,

in Galilee, she entreated Our Lord to work His first miracle, that of changing water into wine, saying to her Son, "They have no wine," our blessed Lady's mental eyesight went further than the material element then wanting on that occasion. She thought of that heavenly wine which germinates virgins, which is nothing else than the most precious blood flowing in the veins of her only-begotten Son, which was one day to be poured at the Sacred Table for the refreshment of countless multitudes panting after the fountain of waters.

* * *

The prayers and entreaties which our blessed Lady offered in view of the execution of God's design regarding the Blessed Eucharist are not the only reason why we hold ourselves indebted to her for the institution of this divine Sacrament. We may say with truth that it was principally in view of His Mother that Christ decided to work out the wonderful change of bread and wine into His body and blood.

The love of Our Lord for His Mother passes all our comprehension. He loved her not only as a devoted Son loves his parent, but also on account of the wonderful gifts of nature and grace with which it had pleased the Holy Ghost to adorn her immaculate soul. Hence, Jesus longed to give Himself entirely to her of whom He had received our nature. Mary, then, on account of her intense love for Jesus and of the heavenly beauty of her soul, was the first person whom Christ had in mind when proposing to institute the Sacrament of His body and blood. Now, as those things which are first in any order are in some measure the cause of the things that follow, so we are indebted to Mary for the condescension of Jesus in permitting us to partake of His most sacred body and blood.

Hence, we should not wonder if, according to a venerable tradition, our blessed Mother received the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, and if after the ascension of our divine Saviour, she should daily be fed by

the Bread of angels at the hand of the Beloved Disciple. From this it follows that the relations between our blessed Lady and the Holy Eucharist are very close indeed, inasmuch as it is through her that this precious heavenly gift has come to us.

* * *

The glorious and immaculate Virgin Mary, besides having interposed her mediation in the execution of God's decree concerning the Blessed Eucharist, and having herself been the principal cause which determined Jesus to institute it, has also with this Sacrament of love another close connection, consisting in the fact that she usually inspires her devout client to receive often this pledge of God's love for us. It is a fact that a soul which ardently loves the Mother of God is, as it were, spontaneously led by her to the Blessed Eucharist.

Mary indeed is the shortest and surest way that leads to Jesus. As this divine Mother does not live for herself, but for her Son, so it is

her glory to lead the souls that turn to her through heartfelt and tender devotion, to Jesus Christ her true and only-begotten Son.

We have a proof of this in what takes place in the most celebrated sanctuaries of Mary, when the pious crowds that flock there seem to have one special care, one unique desire, that of worthily receiving the Bread of life. Mary, as it were, withdraws herself to make room for Jesus. Her motherly mercy and tender goodness attract the sinner to her shrine. When there, the sinner feels the need of reconciliation with God and of feeding on the Bread of life. All this is the secret work of Mary, who is solicitous but of one thing, that is, that men should respond to Christ's desire of giving Himself to us in the Most Holy Eucharist.

No wonder, then, that when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for the adoration of the faithful, the Church encourages the singing of pious hymns in honor of our Blessed Lady, as if to recognize that, as it was through Mary

that we received this august pledge of God's love, so also we should ask her to lead us to Jesus, our most loving and holy Redeemer hidden under the sacramental veils.

Example

SAINT JULIANA FALCONIERI
FOUNDRESS OF THE ORDER OF THE SERVANTS OF MARY

One of the most pure and holy souls which flourished in the garden of the Church in the thirteenth century was without doubt St. Juliana Falconieri, the illustrious foundress of the Third Order of the Servants of Mary.

She was born in Florence in the twelfth century and was the niece of St. Alexis Falconieri, one of the Seven Holy Founders of the Servite order. From early childhood she gave herself to the practise of penance, joined with a tender devotion to the passion of Jesus and the sorrows of Mary, and this devotion led her instinctively to love ever more and more and venerate in a special manner the august Sacrament of the Altar.

An incident which happened in the last moments of her life evinces very clearly what wonderful progress she had made in this beautiful devotion. As her end was approaching, she was most anxious to receive the Blessed Eucharist as Viaticum. Unfortunately the miserable state of her stomach did not allow her to retain even the slightest food. Seeing herself deprived of the consolation of receiving sacramentally her sweet Lord, she entreated the priest at least to condescend to place the consecrated Host upon her heart. Her prayer was soon granted, and lo! hardly had the sacred particle touched her breast, than it disappeared, leaving its imprint upon her virginal flesh. Thus was verified in her case the words of the Canticle[3]: "Put me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm: because love is strong as death."

[3] viii 6.

TWELFTH DAY

DIGNITY OF THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD

"So He this Sacrifice
To institute did will,
And charged His priests alone
That office to fulfil:
In them He did confide
To whom pertaineth still
To take, and to the rest divide."[1]

OUR blessed Saviour having decreed in His infinite goodness to abide with us all times in the Blessed Sacrament until the consummation of the world, imparted to His apostles and their successors the same power which He Himself possesses of consecrating the Holy Eucharist when He said: "Do this for a commemoration of Me."[2] Thus He established the Catholic priesthood, which, together with the Blessed Sacrament itself, is the most beautiful creation of His Sacred Heart.

[1] Hymn Sacris Solemniis, based on a translation by J. D. CHAMBERS, from *The Hymns of the Breviary and Missal*, by REV. MATTHEW BRITT, O.S.B.
[2] Luke xxii. 19.

There had indeed been priests divinely appointed in the Old Law; but these had no power to change the elements of the victims which they offered to God, or to impart to man the gift of supernatural grace. They could, at most, present to God the sacrifices described by Moses, accompanying them with ritual prayers and teaching the people the commandments and prescriptions of the law. But they were unable to offer to God anything better than the holocaust of irrational animals.

The priest of the New Law, on the other hand, is made to be partaker of the Divine Omnipotence inasmuch as he can, by using the words instituted by Christ, do the very same that the Saviour did at the Last Supper; that is, consecrate His body and blood. Moreover, as he is also commissioned to distribute this divine gift to the faithful, he further has power to remit sin in order that men may worthily approach this august Sacrament and derive from it the seed of supernatural grace and the pledge of life eternal.

Oh! great indeed is the dignity of priests, to whom a power has been given which even angels do not possess. Priests alone, who are duly ordained, have power to celebrate and consecrate the body of Christ. For, a priest is the authorized minister of God, who has imparted to him His own power for the sanctification of man. And when a priest celebrates Mass, he honours God, gladdens angels, edifies the Church, helps the living, gives rest to the dead and makes himself a partaker of all good things.[3]

* * *

As the Catholic priesthood has for its object the continuation of Christ's own mission, which was to save souls by bringing them to be made partakers of God's own nature, hence it has the same characteristics which distinguished the priesthood of our divine Saviour.

The first characteristic of Christ's priesthood consists in this, that He did not of His own accord choose this dignity, but He was

[3] *Imitation of Christ*, Book iv, Chap. v.

appointed by God to be our High Priest and "the Pontiff of our confession."[4] So also the priest of the New Law must be called by God and not collectively only, as was the case in the Old Dispensation, when priesthood was hereditary in some special families; but individually and this on account of the high office which is entrusted to Him of consecrating the body and blood of Our Saviour and reconciliating men to God.

Another characteristic of Christ's priesthood is that it lasts forever, according to these words of the Psalm[5]: "Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech." As Christ for all eternity will retain His priestly character as an ornament that will never be canceled, so a priest of the New Law will never cease to bear upon his soul this mark of God's power, even though he were to prove unworthy of such a lofty dignity. The power of consecrating the sacred body and blood of Christ will never be taken from him,

[4] Heb. iii. 1.
[5] cix. 4.

even though, by an act of unconceivable ungratefulness, he were openly to renounce his divine Master.

Furthermore, as the priesthood of Christ had for its primary object the immolation of Himself upon the cross, so is the Catholic priesthood closely connected with the holocaust which the priest must make to God of his own self, of his desires and affections, in order no longer to live for himself or his family, but for that God who has chosen him and lies hidden under the sacramental species. It is with truth, therefore, that a priest is called another Christ, "Sacerdos alter Christus."

* * *

From the fact that the Catholic priesthood is a participation and continuation of the priesthood of Christ, it follows that the faithful, in whom the spirit of Christ abides, have for the priest a special sense of respect and reverence, even as they have for Jesus Christ Himself. In this, however, they do not so

much consider the person, as the office with which the priest is endowed, so that the unworthiness of the person is for the faithful no reason for overlooking or despising his sacred character.

Further, as we know that there can be no exercise of outward religion where the Catholic priesthood should be wanting, hence it is the duty of every good Catholic to promote sacerdotal vocations either by encouraging such youths who feel in themselves the germs of divine calling or by materially helping them through the long and laborious course of preparation which they have to undergo.

For this reason also, those are really worthy of great encomium who, devoting their lives to the training of the candidates for the priesthood, endeavor to form them according to the pattern of Christ Himself, making them thoroughly acquainted with the great truths of our Faith and helping them to acquire those solid virtues which may insure the best results of their sacerdotal ministry.

Example

St. Syrus and the Godless Jew

God has been pleased to show at times how jealous He is of the honor due to the Most Holy Sacrament, by miraculously punishing sinners who should dare to profane the sacred body of Christ hidden under the sacramental veil.

One day, as St. Syrus, first bishop of Pavia, was celebrating Mass in the church of Sts. Gervasius and Protasius, which he had just then consecrated, a Jew, moved by satanical hatred, mixed himself in the crowd of the faithful in order to receive, as others did, the body of Christ, with the intention afterward of misusing the Sacrament for ungodly purposes. However, when, returning to his place, he tried to draw out of his mouth the Sacred Host, he was unable to do so no matter what effort he made. Stricken, as it were, by sudden frenzy, and unable to utter one articulate word, he began to burst out into horrible screaming, making vain efforts to free his

throat from an object which evidently made him suffer horribly.

In fact, the Eucharistic Bread, which he had been unable to swallow, was causing him unheard of torture. It was to him as a firebrand which an invisible hand would twist in his mouth and of which he was unable to rid himself. The Sacred Host, as if unwilling to touch the polluted tongue and palate of the godless Jew, moved in his mouth of its own accord, causing him extraordinary sufferings.

The Bishop St. Syrus then ordered the miserable Jew to be brought before him and reproached him for his impiety, at the same time asking the faithful to pray for him. Then stretching his hand, he drew away the Sacred Host, saying to the Jew: "God now frees thee from thy torment, but see that in future thou dost not commit any similar misdeed."

At the same moment he was delivered from his sufferings. He fell at the feet of St. Syrus

and protested that he would in the future believe in Christ our Saviour. He then asked to be baptized, which event also brought about the conversion of many other Jews.

Thus did the fraud of the devil indirectly contribute to further the propagation of the true Faith in the town of Pavia.

THIRTEENTH DAY

THE BLESSED EUCHARIST, A LIVING FOUNTAIN OF GRACE

You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's Fountains.[1]

NOTHING in this life is so precious as sanctifying grace, which makes us adoptive children of God, brothers of Jesus Christ and heirs of heaven. Sanctifying grace is as a shining light which penetrates and pervades the soul, transforming it into the likeness of God and thus making it most pleasing in the eyes of the Most Holy Trinity. Now, the sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist is that easy and excellent means by which grace is given to our souls and indeed most plentifully.

It is of faith that the most holy Sacrament of the Altar produces graces of its own accord or, as the theological expression has it, "ex opere operato," in such souls as put no ob-

[1] Ps. xii. 3.

stacles to it. The divine Host, then, as soon as it is received by the communicant, produces in him an increase of sanctifying grace together with an augumentation of that special friendship with God which is our greatest good upon this earth and which makes us worthy to see God face to face in heaven. In fact, the measure of our grace upon this earth will also be the measure of the glory which we shall enjoy for all eternity.

This is truer still when he who receives the Blessed Sacrament tries to prepare himself worthily and endeavors to elicit appropriate acts of devotion. In this case there is perfect correspondence between God, who loves the soul, and the soul that wishes to correspond to that divine love. And as the life of the soul consists in the love of God, hence the reception of the Blessed Eucharist is for the soul a fountain of life even as Jesus Christ said[2]: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly," and again[3]: "He

[2] John x. 10.
[3] *Ibid.* vi. 58.

that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." Hence the divine Master concluded[4]: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you." Oh, blessed is he who worthily receives the most sacred body and blood of Christ! "He shall not taste death forever."[5]

* * *

The gift of sanctifying grace, which is the highest favor with which God can adorn man in this life, is not simply an ornament of the soul. It is always accompanied with the supernatural virtues, which are principles of divine operations, by which we can merit life eternal. Thus, the theological virtue of charity and the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance are infused into the soul, with sanctifying grace, whereas this heavenly gift purifies faith and hope, causing the Christian to believe in God and to hope in Him not as in a stranger, but as in a close friend who is to be our final inheritance.

[4] *Ibid.* vi. 54.
[5] *Ibid.* viii. 52.

Now, then, by receiving the divine Sacrament of the Altar, we obtain from God, together with an increase of grace, a strengthening of these supernatural virtues which make us live the very life of Christ, a life more heavenly than human. First of all, the soul illumined by the light of faith, firmly believes in all that God has revealed, especially as regards the Real Presence of Our Saviour in this Sacrament. It firmly trusts in His goodness, seeing that as He has given us such tokens of His love, He will not cease to assist us in all our needs. But particularly it feels itself inflamed with divine love, for it knows that it can only correspond with the boundless charity of Christ by giving itself entirely to that loving Saviour.

Likewise, the soul which worthily receives the Blessed Eucharist, easily and quickly grows in the practice of all the other supernatural virtues by which Catholic life is made particularly fertile in good works. For, what pleases God is not the achieving of great

worldly deeds, the accumulating of wealth, or the seeking of honors and dignities. What is of real value in His eyes is a life animated by a spirit of faith and rich in good works before God; that is, a truly spiritual life, such as is brought about by the worthy reception of the Blessed Eucharist.

Truly may we say of the reception of the Most Holy Sacrament that which the Holy Scripture says of Divine Wisdom[6]: "All good things came to me together with it."

* * *

Among the virtues which, by receiving the Blessed Eucharist, are increased in our souls, two deserve a special mention; namely, meekness and humility. These are the two characteristic virtues of our divine Redeemer, who said of Himself[7]: "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart."

In fact, the Most Blessed Eucharist is both a pledge of Our Lord's infinite charity toward us and a token of His wonderful humility.

[6] Wis. vii. 11.
[7] Matt. xi. 29.

On the one hand, it is the greatest gift which Jesus Christ could make us, as this Sacrament contains His very Person, whole and entire; on the other, the hidden state in which He lives among us and the lowly life which He apparently leads in the tabernacle of His love, remind us that there is one thing which He appreciates above even the working of miracles; that is, the "hidden man of the heart."[8]

It is natural, then, that our tender Saviour, on coming into our souls by His sacrament should stir them to a greater likeness with His own most Sacred Heart, especially when we ardently ask Him to work in ourselves this wonderful change. Oh! nothing indeed can bear a better testimony to the wonderful efficacy of the most Blessed Eucharist in our souls and, at the same time, nothing can give greater pleasure to the Sacred Heart of our divine Lord than that those who frequently receive Him in the Blessed Eucharist should

[8] 1 Pet. iii. 4.

endeavor to become similar to Him in meekness and humility.

Example

ST. SATYRUS, BROTHER OF ST. AMBROSE

In the year 378, St. Ambrose, recently named Bishop of Milan, sent his brother Satyrus to Africa to collect from a certain man named Prosperus, his debtor, a sum of money which he refused to restore. Satyrus who, though believing Christ, had not yet been baptized, set off on his errand and after some days arrived in view of the coast of Sardinia. However, as the vessel was old and worn out and the sea extremely rough, for it was winter, shipwreck soon followed, with the prospect of certain death. In his anxiety Satyrus entreated God not to allow him to die without having been regenerated by the sacred mysteries.

Now there were on the ship several Christians who had brought with them, as was then the custom, the sacred mystery of the body of

Christ. When they saw that there was no more hope left for them, they met together, adored the holy Viaticum and received it for the last time.

Satyrus being deprived of this consolation asked for a particle of the consecrated bread and placing it reverently in a kerchief, bound it to his neck and, trusting in divine help, threw himself into the sea, making for the neighboring island of Sardinia.

Having happily reached a town, he went to see the bishop to whom, as a test of his faith, he showed the sacred particle, adding that he was in communion with the Bishop of Rome. He was then baptized and soon after returned to Milan.

These wonderful fruits of St. Satyrus' devotion to the Blessed Sacrament caused St. Ambrose to observe that if such is the power of the body of Jesus Christ when it is enveloped in a napkin, what must it be when that same body rests on our lips and dwells in our hearts.

FOURTEENTH DAY

THE VIRTUES OF FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY PROMOTED BY THE RECEPTION OF THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

"Make me more and more believe Thy promise,
Hope in Thee, and love Thee over all."[1]

THE life of a true Christian may be said to consist in the practise of the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity. By these man pleases God, lives a holy and peaceful life, and secures a plentiful harvest of merits by which to make sure the possession of eternal happiness. Now, the Blessed Eucharist when worthily received has a wonderful power to make the soul lead truly a life of faith, of hope, and of charity.

In the first place, the reception of the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist promotes in the soul a life of faith, because this august Sacrament is properly the mystery of faith, "mysteriam fidei." It is in very deed a compendium of all that Holy Church proposes to us

[1] Rhythm *Adoro te devote,* Translation by John O'Hagan.

to believe as regards the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Redemption of mankind through the passion and death of our divine Saviour, the power of God to work miracles, the resurrection of the flesh and the life everlasting. All these great truths are either explicitly or virtually contained in the Most Blessed Eucharist, so that he who firmly believes that he receives the true body and blood of Christ under the accidents of bread and wine, makes thereby an act of perfect Catholic faith.

To realize how much Our Lord appreciates the virtue of faith in us, we need only remember how He commended that virtue in the Centurion[2] and the Canaanean woman[3] and with what sense of sorrow He foresaw that in the last days of the world infidelity would creep in men's hearts.[4]

Let us entertain in our souls a great esteem for the virtue of faith and let us often re-

[2] Matt. viii. 10.
[3] Matt. xv. 28.
[4] Luke xviii. 8.

ceive the Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist to the effect of augmenting it in our souls.

* * *

If faith is the root and foundation of our justification, on the other hand, hope or the expectation of future supernatural goods is that which lifts us up above earth and sustains us in the combat, while it shows us as already ours those ineffable goods which we expect from God's bounty both in this life and in the next.

To properly understand the importance of the virtue of hope, it is enough to remember how the vice of despair, if it is not the most grievous among sins, is, however, the most noxious to the interests of the soul, inasmuch as it deprives it of that means which alone is apt to comfort it in the many difficulties of life.

Oh! how sad is the condition of a man who has lost all hope in God and does not trust in the dispositions of Divine Providence!

Not having anything to rely upon but his own self and this miserable world which cannot give true happiness, he must necessarily live in a state of moral depression which is but a foreshadowing of that dreary despondency which tortures the damned forever.

In striking words St. Paul describes the sad condition of him from whom the virtue of hope is absent; namely, such a one is "without Christ, alien from the conversation of Israel, a stranger to the testament, having no hope of the promise and without God in this world."[5] Now, forsooth, the Blessed Eucharist is for the wayfarer a very potent and constant incentive to lead a life of supernatural hope. For he has in this divine Sacrament Jesus Christ, who is at the same time our one Mediator with God and that same infinite Good which we expect to enjoy in heaven after this life's journey is over. And how can we doubt but that God will be faithful to His promises, when He gives us His own Son

[5] Eph. ii. 12.

Made Man to abide in the midst of us and to be our food and drink?

Oh! indeed, we may firmly believe that if we are faithful to God's promises, He will give us grace in this life and glory in the next, when already we possess Him under the sacramental species. Truly in the Blessed Sacrament "a pledge is given us of future glory." (Anth. O Sacrum Convivium.)

* * *

The perfection of Christian life is charity, which is the Queen of all virtues, greater yet than faith or hope,[6] and so agreeable to God, that on its account He came down from heaven to show us, by His own works, what this divine virtue is and what it implies.

The virtue of charity comprehends a two-fold precept. The first regards God whom we are directed to love with our whole heart, with our whole soul and with our whole mind.[7] The second precept regards our

[6] 1 Cor. xiii. 13.
[7] Matt. xxii. 37.

neighbor, whom we must love even as our own selves.[8]

This precept of charity toward God and toward man is a thing which it is difficult for us to fulfil in this life on account of the tendency of our corrupt nature, which is ever bent upon seeking our own private good rather than the glory of God or the interests of our neighbor.

But with the help of divine grace, especially of that grace which is imparted to us in the Blessed Eucharist, the fulfilment of this obligation becomes light indeed. For this Most Holy Sacrament is in itself a spark of that fire which Christ came to cast upon this earth and which He so ardently wished should be kindled.[9] And so as it is impossible to stand by a great flame and not feel the warmth that emanates from it, so it is but natural that, by receiving this great Sacrament with devotion, the soul should feel itself inflamed with the love of God and its neighbor.

[8] *Ibid.* 39.
[9] Luke xii. 49.

Besides this, the remembrance of the motive which prompted our divine Saviour to institute this Sacrament; that is, His charity toward God and toward man, and the consideration of His intense love both for His heavenly Father and for us, His brothers by adoption, cannot but excite in our souls similar sentiments of fervent charity toward God our Supreme Good and of patient and forebearing affection toward our fellow-men, destined like us to the possession of God in paradise.

We give Thee praise, O Divine Lord, for having instituted this Sacrament of love to unite as in a bond of perfect charity the hearts of all good Christians, "that they all may be one thing with Thee, even as Thou and the Father are one."[10]

[10] John xvii. 21.

Example

PUNISHMENT INFLICTED ON PROFANERS OF THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

In the year 1370, a rich Jew of Enghien, in Hainaut, named Jonathas, induced a friend of his, who had recently been converted to the Christian faith, to procure for him some consecrated Hosts. This unfortunate man, influenced by the promise of a great sum of money, went to Brussels where he forced the tabernacle of the church of St. Catherine, and took away the ciborium containing a number of sacred Particles, which he gave to Jonathas. This man, however, a few days after, was found murdered in his garden.

His wife, fearing for her life, left Enghien and came to Brussels, where she placed the ciborium in the hands of the chief Jews of the city, who spread the sacred Particles on a table and began to stab them with knives. Immediately blood began to flow abundantly, sprinkling both the table and the vestments of the profaners.

This prodigy frightened them to such an extent that they were suddenly thrown back, as once the soldiers who had come to seize Christ at Gethsemani. However, they did not for all that become any better; but fearing the punishments then enacted against such godless blasphemers, they were concerned only with removing the traces of their crimes.

To that effect they deputed a woman to take the Hosts to the Jews of Cologne; but hardly was she in possession of the ciborium with the sacred Particles than she was seized with extraordinary fear, and brought instead the sacred treasure to a priest of Brussels, who placed it in a chapel of the church of St. Gudula, where some of the Hosts are preserved to the present day.

FIFTEENTH DAY

THE BLESSED EUCHARIST, A MEANS OF KEEPING ALIVE IN US THE FERVOR OF CHARITY

"They shall publish the memory of the abundance of Thy sweetness."[1]

THE most precious gift of God to man is without doubt that of divine charity, which so links our hearts to the heart of our heavenly Father as to make, as it were, but one thing of both. But although divine charity may be abiding in our soul, yet it may remain and oftentimes does remain inert, thus depriving us of those wonderful merits which an active charity is apt to produce. This is why we should endeavor not only to keep jealously this heavenly gift in us, but also to keep it active, thus negotiating it as does a skilful merchant his money. This is what is meant by saying that a soul abides in the fervor of charity.

Now, the Blessed Eucharist is one of the

[1] Ps. cxliv. 7.

most efficacious means to keep alive in us this divine fervor, or as St. Paul says,[2] to make us "in spirit fervent," and this for several reasons. The first motive why the Blessed Eucharist keeps alive in us the fervor of charity is because it continually and vividly puts us in mind of the benefits conferred upon us by God, for it cannot be but that, by reflecting on a person's benefactions in our regard, we should feel inclined to requite him with love.

Now, indeed, the Blessed Eucharist, besides being in itself a compendium of God's loving goodness toward us, puts us in mind of all that God has done for mankind in the course of ages. It tells us how wonderfully He fed His people in the desert, the manna being then but a figure of the Eucharist; it reminds us how our loving Saviour suffered for our sake the most excruciating torments, this Sacrament having been instituted to be a keepsake of Christ's bitter passion and death; and

[2] Rom. xii. 11.

it gladdens us by the prospect of eternal happiness in heaven, it being a pledge of future glory. Oh, indeed, devotion to this most Blessed Sacrament, by reminding the soul all that God has done for us, will keep alive in it the precious flame of divine charity.

* * *

The Blessed Eucharist keeps alive in the soul the fervor of charity not only by strongly reminding us of God's favors in our regard, but also by making us live habitually in the divine Presence. To live and walk in God's presence is already to be perfect, according as God Himself said[8]: "Walk before Me and be perfect."

In reality, when we reflect that God not only sees us, but abides within us; that wherever we go, He is with us; that whatever we do is perfectly known to Him; that our innermost thoughts are as clearly present to Him as if they were exposed at the midday sun; we cannot but feel greatly moved not only to re-

[8] Gen. xvii. 1.

frain from evil, but also to do good. Moreover, as we know that God is a most tender Father, who loves us with an unbounded love, the thought of His presence can but prove for us a strong incentive to love Him with our whole heart and with our whole soul.

Now, the Blessed Eucharist is indeed a most potent means for us to recall to mind the divine Presence on this earth. For there, under the sacramental veils, Jesus, true God and true man, is really present. He is in very truth Emmanual, God with us, who does not disdain to dwell in hand-made temples and who for the love of us, multiplies His presence as frequently as there are altars on which Mass is said or tabernacles in which the sacred species are preserved.

In reality, it is easy for a Christian of vivid faith, so to regulate his day, as often to withdraw himself, if not in body, at least in spirit, before an altar where the Blessed Eucharist is preserved, renewing his faith in the divine Presence, adoring his sacramental Lord, and

humbly asking Him the graces necessary to lead a truly spiritual life. Oh! indeed, the recollection of the presence of Our Saviour in the Eucharist is a potent means to keep alive in our hearts the fervor of charity.

* * *

One of the greatest impediments to the fervor of charity in the present life, is to be found in the difficulties and annoyances which encompass us on all sides. It is easy for the soul to lift itself up to God when life runs smoothly and things go according to our wishes. But when troubles and anxieties overcome us, then we easily fall into despondence and lose sight of Him who should be the only object of all our affections. We then forget the goodness of God and His fatherly care of us; the memory of His benefits vanishes away from our minds, and we live almost as if God did not exist.

Now, a means of bearing cheerfully the anxieties and adversities of life and consequently of maintaining in us the fervor of

charity, is without doubt the Blessed Eucharist. First of all, the memory of what Our Lord Himself, present under the sacred species, has suffered for us, can but encourage us to bear the trials of life patiently and with a spirit of vivid faith.

As the guileful proceedings of the Pharisees, the dire anger of the Jews, the coarseness and lukewarmness of the disciples did not prevent Jesus from loving His heavenly Father and also mankind with His whole heart, so a Christian animated by the example of this amiable Saviour, whom he knows to be present in the Blessed Eucharist and whom he invokes with a great spirit of faith, will continue loving God with all the fervor of his soul, notwithstanding the adversities of life. "Many waters were not able to quench charity, neither could the floods drown it."[4]

[4] Cant. viii. 7.

Example

THE CROSS OF CARAVACA

In the year 1227, a saintly priest, whose zeal for the Faith had urged to go among the Moors, was seized by them and handed over to an infidel prince named Zeyt-Abuzeyt. One day, hearing the priest mention the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the prince asked him what the object of that ceremony was. To which the prisoner replied that when a priest, clothed with the sacred vestments, goes up to the altar and recites the words which Christ pronounced at the Last Supper, the bread which he holds in his hands becomes flesh and the wine blood, for these elements are changed into the body and blood of the God of all holiness.

The prince, being anxious to witness such a wonder, ordered sacred vestments to be brought and asked the priest to begin Mass, which he did. But on going up the altar steps, he remarked that the cross was missing and that he could not continue the divine

rite, as the Church does not allow the celebration of the divine mysteries, except in the presence of a crucifix. At that very moment, however, a beautiful cross was seen brought down by two angels, and so the Holy Sacrifice went on.

The prince, full of astonishment, considered attentively each ceremony, when, at the moment of the elevation, he saw the Host transformed into a beautiful Babe surrounded with luminous rays. He was so moved at the sight, that, being enlightened by interior grace, he elicited an act of vivid faith and generously embraced the religion of Jesus Christ, changing his name into that of Ferdinand, in memory of this holy King of Castille. He died a holy death at Saragozza.[5]

The miraculous cross was preserved with religious reverence, and facsimiles of the same were made and distributed among the faithful. St. Teresa and St. Benedict Joseph Labré used to keep crosses of Caravaca among their objects of devotion.

[5] Joan. Roblesii, Hist. In Act. SS. Boll., 30 Mail.

SIXTEENTH DAY

THE BLESSED EUCHARIST, AN ANTIDOTE AGAINST SIN

"Deign, O Jesus, Pelican of heaven,
Me, a sinner, in Thy Blood to lave."[1]

THE greatest evil that can befall man on this earth is sin, which, if mortal, deprives him of the spiritual life of grace and makes him liable to eternal punishment; if venial, dampens the fervor of charity and prepares the soul for deadly falls. How, then, must we be thankful to God for that means by which we are kept back both from offending Him grievously and saddening His heart by minor infidelities. Now this means is precisely the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

That the Most Blessed Eucharist is an antidote against sin is evident if we consider the origin, the nature, and the end of an offense against God.

First of all, sin has its origin in the exag-

[1] Rhythm *Adoro te devote*, Translation of John O'Hagan.

gerated love of self, which makes man forget his duties toward God and despise His law, and this for the sake of private interest. The Blessed Eucharist, on the other hand, is a pure gift of the infinite bounty of God, who "so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son."[2]

Again, the nature of sin consists in keeping God away from the soul either entirely, as does mortal sin, or according to the actual communication of friendship, as does venial sin. Now it is the proper effect of the Blessed Sacrament to unite the soul to God by causing it to avoid all that might break this mystical union and urging it to cling more closely to the one real good which is God Himself, even as St. Paul says: "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit."[3]

Finally, the end of sin is death, spiritual death, which leaves the soul barren of good works. For, mortal sin cuts the soul away entirely from the tree of life leaving it without

[2] John iii. 16.
[3] 1 Cor. vi. 17.

any influence whatever from the fountain of grace, and therefore its fruits are all dead fruits; venial sin, although it does not deprive the soul of divine grace, yet from the very fact that it is an offense against God, frustrates that merit which comes from our actions when done under the influence of charity. Now, the Blessed Eucharist is precisely that precious root which not only gives life to the soul, but also quickens its activity in the spiritual order and makes it bear copious fruits of life and salvation.

* * *

It is the quality of the Blessed Eucharist to be an antidote against both mortal and venial sin. To begin by the first, the Blessed Eucharist gives us grace to avoid mortal sin inasmuch as by illuminating the intellect in the law of God and of virtue, and strengthening the will to do only what is pleasing to the divine Majesty, it helps man to follow that orderly and holy course of life which befits a Christian.

Moreover, the Blessed Eucharist has a wonderful effect to rule and govern our passions, directing those that are good in the path of virtue, and checking those that are disorderly lest they should cause the ruin of the soul. Indeed, when the passions of our souls are properly brought into play under the direction of a right mind, they may prove powerful instruments of virtue; but if left to themselves they become like wild animals rushing madly into every disorder and thus causing the mortal ruin of man. Now it is the proper effect of the Most Blessed Eucharist to lessen the violence of our passions and direct them in the path of virtue, thus creating in our soul a disposition to good, extinguishing the fire of concupiscence, and giving rise to pure and holy desires, for it is truly "the corn of the elect and the wine springing forth virgins."[4] Thus by curbing our wicked passions and directing them to good, the Blessed Eucharist preserves us from falling into mortal sin.

[4] Zach. ix. 17.

But there is more yet. This divine Sacrament is in itself a source of so much purity that, should it perchance find some mortal sin lying unconsciously in the folds of the soul, it would, by that very fact, destroy its stain and restore to it divine grace and friendship, just as fire destroys every impurity, and darkness cannot abide with light. Truly is the Blessed Eucharist the tree of life planted in the midst of the paradise of the Church[5] for it has the virtue of preserving from corruption those who eat of its fruit.

* * *

The Most Blessed Eucharist is not only an antidote against mortal sin, but it also preserves the soul from venial offenses into which we unfortunately fall so often. The cause of the frequency of venial sin is to be found in the slackness of our charity, in our too great attachment to our own will or in our cleaving too much to the goods of this earth.

[5] Gen. ii. 9.

Now the Blessed Eucharist, by keeping alive in us the fire of divine charity, makes us instinctively shrink from the very idea of offending God, who is our supreme Good and deserves to be perfectly loved by us. In fact, when this fire of divine charity is burning in a soul, that soul has but one desire, that of giving pleasure to God by thoughts and works agreeable to Him. It has but one fear, that of displeasing such an amiable Father, a friend so tender and so true.

Again, as by receiving the Blessed Eucharist we are said to live in Christ and Christ in us, so the soul that is nourished by this heavenly food and drink, spontaneously identifies its own will with that of God, so that it wills that which God wills, all that He wills, and nothing but what He wills, its prayer being that of the Psalmist: "Teach me to do Thy Will, because Thou art my God."[6] Now as all sin, including venial sin, is something which is thought, said or done against the

[6] Ps. cxlii. 12.

will of God, he who worthily receives the Blessed Eucharist, from the very fact that he strives to identify his will with God's most blessed will, must necessarily thereby avoid venial sin.

Another source of venial sin is, as we have said, an undue attachment to the goods of this world, and this too is corrected by the Blessed Eucharist, which contains the fulness of the divine blessings, so that the conversation of him who often receives this divine Sacrament, is, as St. Paul says, in heaven.

Example

THE SPIDER IN ST. PAUL'S, LONDON

Toward the year 1381, a doctor of Oxford, named Wyclif, began to oppose the Catholic dogma of transubstantiation. His plea was that the substance of bread and wine abide in the Sacrament of the Altar after the consecration and the accidents are not really separated from their natural subject. He even went further, denying the presence of Jesus

Christ in the Eucharist, which consequently should have no title to our devotion. He even went so far as to impiously assert that the least among living creatures, a reptile for instance, has a greater claim to our consideration that the consecrated eucharistic bread.

The blasphemous statements of this heresiarch found an echo in the corrupt hearts of several godless men. Among others a workman named John, a tailor, began publicly to proclaim the new doctrine, saying that the consecrated Host in nothing differs from ordinary blessed bread. As he continued in his obstinacy, he was taken before the ecclesiastical tribunal which then had its seat in the church of St. Paul's in London.

The judges tried to bring him back by persuasion to the faith of his fathers and ordered him to prostrate himself before the Sacred Host. But the unfortunate man protested that he would rather incline himself before a spider, however repugnant this might

seem, than bend his knees before the Eucharist.

The faithful present were greatly shocked, but it was not long before they saw the effect of divine vengeance. At the very moment that the man uttered these blasphemous words, an enormous and hideous spider was seen coming down from the ceiling of the temple. It came straight to the lips of the blasphemer, seeking to penetrate his mouth and it was only with great difficulty that it could be removed.

The persons present, among whom were several bishops, the Duke of York and Thomas of Oxford, Chancelor of the Realm, were seized with fright at such a sign of divine vengeance. As for the unfortunate heretic, he became no better by this event and consequently was punished according to the laws then existing.

SEVENTEENTH DAY

WONDERFUL EFFECTS OF THE BLESSED EUCHARIST ON THE SOUL

"The bread of Christ is fat, and He shall yield dainties to kings."[1]

THE spiritual life of a Christian proceeds on lines similar to those of his material or bodily life. We are so constituted by nature that we must take food and drink daily in order that our body may not only preserve its proper health and vigor, but also increase unto the fulness of perfect manhood. God, whose fatherly care embraces especially man made to His image and likeness, by a constant display of His great bounty, causes the earth to yield what is necessary for the sustenance of so many individuals. "The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them meat in due season. Thou openest Thy hand and fillest with blessings every living creature."[2]

[1] Antiphon for Lauds of Corpus Christi, adapted from Gen. xlix. 20.
[2] Ps. cxliv. 15, 16.

Great indeed is the goodness of God, who provides daily for the bodily wants of so many millions of men. Truly He shows Himself thereby to be not only the all-powerful Lord of this great universe, but also a most kind father who knows and loves all His children, abandoning none, but tenderly providing them with the necessary food.

But God's tender mercy toward man is no less great in regard to the life of the soul. Grace is that divine element which gives life to our souls, which preserves them from the corruption of death, which makes them grow in the love of God until they reach that perfection of charity to which they have been predestined by the decrees of Divine Providence.

Now, the Blessed Eucharist is that supernatural means purposely established by God to maintain in us the life of grace, and make us produce those works of virtue and sanctity which may secure for us the possession of eternal bliss. This spiritual effect is worked

in our souls in a most wonderful way; namely, this Sacrament produces grace *ex opere operato,* that is, of its own accord, provided there be no obstacle of sin in the soul. In other words, the very presence of the sacramental species in our breast increases the grace which we possess, by making us more and more agreeable to God.

This increase is not limited to a certain number of years, as we see that the body, when it has reached a certain age grows no longer. The increase of grace produced by the Blessed Eucharist continues during our whole mortal life. Truly, this Sacrament is the Bread of life, and blessed are they who eat daily of its fruit.

* * *

Man, encompassed as he is in the present life by all manner of temptations, can hardly for any length of time abstain from falling into some imperfection or venial sin without a special gift of God. For he cannot always be on the alert, and oftentimes, when en-

deavoring to shun one defect he falls into the opposite vice; hence Holy Scripture says of the just man that "he shall fall seven times."[3] These imperfections are, as it were, so many ailments, venial though they be, which weaken our soul and keep it from producing that plentiful harvest of merits which a good Christian ought to yield.

Now, a remedy for these shortcomings and imperfections and consequently to the spiritual weakness and torpor which ensue from them, is to be found in holy communion. As a most powerful medicine the Blessed Eucharist restores perfect health to the soul, bringing back each of our faculties to that state of full activity which a sound man enjoys.

First of all, it brings home to us a clear idea of God's mysteries, freeing the mind from those clouds of doubt or that levity and inconsiderateness which are so prejudicial to the soul. Next it dissipates that anxiety which

[3] Prov. xxiv. 16.

oftentimes torments well-minded Christians and prevents them from making true progress in the spiritual life; namely, the doubt whether they are actually in the friendship of God; for a person who approaches the Blessed Eucharist with a pure intention, can reasonably hold that he actually enjoys divine grace. Lastly, the Blessed Eucharist strengthens the will and arms it for the warfare, so that the Christian, after he has received holy communion, should rise as a new man or, as St. John Chrysostom says, as a lion ready to fight the world, the flesh and the devil. Thus does this divine Sacrament restore us to perfect health.

* * *

The Blessed Eucharist is truly the food of our soul, whilst it not only maintains and augments in us the life of grace and remedies our weakness, but also fills our minds and hearts with heavenly consolations.

In this land of exile and misery we have need of some consolation to sustain us in the

warfare and prevent us from forgetting the one great aim of our lives; that is, eternal salvation. But human joys are very inadequate. They can at best lend a passing alleviation to our pains, and were it not for the supernatural consolations which alone religion offers, we should easily fall into despondency.

Now, the fact of knowing that Jesus is present among us under the sacramental species, is already for us poor banished children of Eve a source of great consolation. But besides that, Jesus Himself, either from His throne of mercy in the tabernacle or at the Holy Table, infuses into our souls such sweet sentiments of heavenly consolation as enable us to carry our crosses and to look forward to the eternal recompense.

But to obtain this supernatural and lasting consolation, it is necessary actually to believe firmly and love ardently the divine Sacrament, as this particular effect is the direct outcome of a lively faith and an actual motion of charity. Hence the necessity of a serious prep-

aration by which a Catholic rouses himself to a vivd realzation of Christ's presence among us and to an ardent love of God and men.

Example

LOUIS-LE-GROS, KING OF FRANCE, HEALED BY THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

In the month of October, 1135, the king of France, Louis-le-Gros, whilst staying in the castle of Montereau, in Gâtinais, contracted a severe illness which soon put his life in danger. He then assembled a large number of bishops, abbots and priests and made a sort of general confession in their presence. After that, he asked to receive the body of Our Saviour. The Blessed Sacrament was then brought to him; but before receiving it he wished to make a solemn profession of faith in the divine Presence. "I believe," he said, "that this Eucharist is that same body which Jesus Christ took of the Virgin and which He has bequeathed to His disciples in order to

unite them to Himself and make them abide with Him. This most holy blood I firmly believe to be the same blood which flowed from His side when He was crucified on the cross. I confess this by word and in my heart, and I ardently desire that this holy Viaticum may fortify me in my passage to the next life against all the powers of hell."

The King then received the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ with great devotion. But lo! the Bread of life had hardly touched his lips than he began to feel better, and soon after, he completely recovered from his mortal illness. His first care was to visit the Basilica of St. Denys, near Paris, to give thanks to God for this great benefit.[4]

[4] Suger. Vita Ludovici Grossi, in Recueil des Historiens des Gaules, t. XII, pp. 69, 813, 865.

EIGHTEENTH DAY

THE BLESSED EUCHARIST, THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

"Except you eat the flesh of the Son
Of Man and drink His blood, you shall
Not have life in you."[1]

OUR Divine Saviour in the sixth chapter of St. John, in which He discourses on the future institution of the Blessed Eucharist, repeatedly insists upon the fact that only from the eating of His body and the drinking of His blood, can man have life in Him. And indeed this divine Sacrament is the life not only of the Church as such, but also of each individual member of the Church.

First of all, the Blessed Eucharist is the life of the Church inasmuch as we always possess Jesus Christ living in the midst of us, according to His promise: "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."[2] And this indeed constitutes the great difference between the Catholic Church and the Protestant sects which have severed themselves from it and which are, as it were,

[1] John vi. 54.
[2] Matt. xxviii. 20.

withered branches cut away from the trunk and fit only to feed the fire. Whereas these sects have no living head to guide them and infuse into them the spirit of faith and of charity, the Catholic Church on the other hand, enjoys in her midst the consoling presence of her divine Spouse, Jesus Christ, who, from His tabernacle of love, watches over her, prays continually for her welfare, consoles her children and animates them to the warfare of salvation, assuring them of the final victory.

Indeed the real and continual presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in our tabernacles may be assumed to be the most eloquent token of His love for us inasmuch as, being perfectly happy in heaven, He notwithstanding chooses to appear still, for our sake, as a wayfarer such as we are. "Why wilt thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man turning in to lodge."[3]

* * *

[3] Ter. xiv. 8.

The Blessed Eucharist is the life of the Church not only because it is a pledge of the permanent presence of our risen Saviour among us, but because it proves the inspiring principle of the most excellent works of virtue and charity, as well as of unbounded generosity, which are ever produced on this earth.

It is indeed a marvelous sight to behold the multiform works of beneficence to which the love of our divine Saviour, as centered in the Blessed Sacrament, has given rise. It may well be said that there is not a misery in the world which has not been met in the Catholic Church by a corresponding charitable institution. We see indeed spread all over the world houses where the poor and the sick are lovingly cared for, where the young and the aged, destitute of all human help, are surrounded with motherly care and provided for with all the necessaries of life. Mental weaknesses also, moral disorders, and all sorts of troubles and miseries are met by Christian charity with timely remedies and comforts.

Now, what is it that inspires all these works of charity but the influence of the Blessed Eucharist; that is, of Jesus Christ Himself, abiding with us and breathing into His devout followers that same spirit of unbounded charity which animates Him, and to which St. Paul appealed when he said: "The charity of Christ presseth us."[4] Truly the Blessed Eucharist is the life of all those works of charity which blossom in the beautiful garden of the Catholic Church.

* * *

As the Blessed Eucharist is the life of the Church at large and inspires all the magnificent works of charity which thrive in its bosom, so also it is the life of individual Catholics who strive to make it the center of their thoughts and affections.

This our divine Saviour expressly stated when He said: "Amen, Amen, I say unto you: He that believeth in Me hath everlasting life. I am the Bread of life. Your

[4] 2 Cor. v. 14.

fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the Bread which cometh down from Heaven that if any man eat of it, he may not die. I am the living Bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever; and the Bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world."[5]

There is, however, this great difference between the eucharistic and ordinary bread, that ordinary bread is changed into the substance of him who eats it; whereas, eucharistic bread changes him who partakes of it in its own nature, that is in the nature of our divine Lord Himself, giving him Christ's own life, His spirit,[6] His virtues, His affections and desires, that he may be made "partaker of the divine nature."[7]

Truly, of the Blessed Eucharist we may say that "all good things have come to us together with it."[8]

[5] John vi. 47-52.
[6] Gal. iv. 5.
[7] 2 Pet. i. 4.
[8] Wisd. vii. 11.

Example

THE EUCHARISTIC MIRACLE OF AMSTERDAM

In the year 1345, a sick man of Amsterdam being in danger of death, received the Blessed Eucharist in the form of Viaticum, but soon after expelled it, being overtaken by a violent vomiting. All the matter was then thrown into the fire, including the consecrated Host, which, however, was seen lifted above the flames and maintaining itself—intact in the air.

This fact came to the knowledge of the priest who had given communion to the sick man. He came bringing a ciborium and reverently placed in it the miraculous Host and took it to the neighboring church. But the day after, the same Host was found again, enveloped in a linen cloth, in the chamber of that same sick man. Once more the priest came and took it away, but once again it was found in the same room without anyone being able to account for this transfer.

The people then understood that it was

God's will that a public homage should be given to that Host which had thus miraculously been preserved from the flames and which had been twice found in its previous place no less miraculously. It was then processionally carried through the town at night, and this procession was repeated every year, until the time of the Protestant Reformation, when every exterior manifestation of Catholic worship was forbidden under severe penalties.

From that time forward the Catholics of Amsterdam have been in the habit of joining in little groups every year on the anniversary of this miracle, following the same course which the solemn procession once followed. This nightly procession, in which prayers are recited in an undertone, is called the "Stille Omgang."

NINETEENTH DAY

THE BLESSED EUCHARIST, A PLEDGE OF A HOLY LIFE, OF A SAINTLY DEATH AND OF A BLESSED RESURRECTION

"The mind is filled with grace and a pledge of future glory is given to us."[1]

WE READ in Holy Scripture that when Tobias was about to send his son on a long journey to recover some money which he had lent to a relative, an angel presented himself to his son, the young Tobias, offering to accompany him safely to and from his place of destination. And indeed this angel whose name was Raphael, was a most sure guide and a loving companion to the wayfarer. Not content with guiding his steps on that long journey, he protected him against the assault of a great fish which would otherwise have devoured him; he cast the devil out of his wife Sarah, and after having led him back to his loving parents, he restored sight to his aged father.[2]

[1] Antiphon *O Sacrum Convivium.*
[2] Book of Tobias, *passim.*

This beautiful historical tract is a striking figure of what the Blessed Eucharist is for us. Jesus, present in the Sacrament of the Altar, is truly our heavenly Raphael, who leads us through the difficult paths of life, protects us against the snares of our devilish foe, and brings us safely back to our heavenly country, from which we had been driven away by sin.

Indeed the beneficial action of the Blessed Eucharist in our souls regards our journey through life, our last moment on this earth, when we are about to appear before God, and the happy event of our resurrection.

First of all, the Blessed Eucharist is the light that guides our steps during our earthly pilgrimage. It is a lighthouse that shows the sailor toiling with a rough sea the way to the harbor; a way mark that guides the traveler's step in a dense forest; a mariner's compass that indicates to the captain on the high seas the route he has to follow. It is also a safeguard against the dangers that encompass us on every side.

Let a Catholic entertain in his heart a sincere devotion to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, and he may be certain of passing unscathed through the rocks and quicksands of this miserable life.

* * *

If the most Blessed Eucharist is our heavenly viaticum during life, it is such especially at the hour of death, when the great journey is to be undertaken from time to eternity, from temporal trial to eternal reward. It is then that we particularly stand in need of special aid and assistance to help us to overcome the snares which the devil lays in our way at that critical moment.

We have a striking instance of how the Blessed Eucharist is for us a potent means of preparing ourselves for the great passage of eternity, in the case of Elias' journey to the mountain of God, Horeb.

One day when he knew that he was sought to death by Jezabel, he being afraid, rose up and went one day's journey into the desert,

where he sat under a juniper tree, requesting that he might die. He then lay down and slept profoundly; and behold an angel of the Lord touched him, saying: "Arise and eat." He looked and, behold, there was at his head a hearthcake and a vessel of water: he ate and drank and fell asleep again. A second time an angel came and touched him, saying as before: "Arise, eat: for thou hast yet a great way to go." And Elias arose; he ate and drank and walked in the strength of the food forty days and forty nights unto the mount of God, Horeb.[3]

Thus it is that this divine food, the Blessed Eucharist, taken often during life and especially before death, strengthens the wayfarer and prepares him to face, on the mountain of God, the great Judge who is to pass upon him the final sentence of eternal happiness or of eternal misery.

* * *

As the Blessed Eucharist is our faithful

[3] 3 Reg. xix. 3-8.

companion in this valley of tears and our Viaticum of comfort and hope in death, so it is also a sure pledge of our resurrection, as Our Lord Himself assured us, when he said: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day."[4]

It is a point of Catholic faith, that all men are to rise at the angel's trumpet-call on the last day, in order to appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that every one may "receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil."[5] Christ's rising from the dead will be the instrumental cause of the resurrection to be accomplished at the end of time; but the blessed resurrection of the just to eternal life, will take place in virtue of the Holy Eucharist, which therefore is called a pledge of future glory. Not that the actual reception of this divine Sacrament be absolutely necessary in order to rise to eternal life; but be-

[4] John vi. 55.
[5] 2 Cor. v. 10.

cause the grace of a happy resurrection will be given to the just in virtue of the grace contained in the Blessed Eucharist of which grace this great Sacrament is the divinely appointed dispensing channel.

All praise, then, be given forever to this Sacrament divine, which is the sacrament of Him, who is "our life, our health and our resurrection, through whom we have been saved and freed."[6]

Example

THE SACRED HOST RESPLENDENT IN THE AIR

In the year 1453 a fact happened in Turin, in Piedmont, which showed how God is jealous of the honor due to the Most Blessed Sacrament. Some robbers having penetrated into the church of the little village of Exilles, in the Diocese of Suza, took away among other objects of worship, a monstrance containing a consecrated Host. After having

[6] Introit of the Mass of the Exaltation of the Cross.

placed their booty on a mule's back they took to flight.

They had already reached the town of Turin, when suddenly the mule stopped and fell on its knees, and neither shouts nor blows could induce it to proceed farther. One can well imagine the surprise of the bystanders at this occurrence. Their astonishment, however, was greatly increased when they perceived a monstrance emerging by its own power from the bag in which it was hidden and rising at a great height in the air, where it remained suspended shedding floods of light on all sides.

This miraculous event was soon brought to the ears of the Bishop who came in solemn procession to the spot, preceded by the clergy. He, together with the people, fell on his knees, adoring the God of love hidden under the sacramental veils. Then the monstrance was seen to descend slowly, while the Host, leaving the monstrance, remained suspended, sending bright rays in all directions. The

Bishop then ordered a chalice to be brought and kept underneath it with deep respect. The Host then came of its own accord and placed itself in the sacred cup.

On the spot where this prodigy happened, a church was built in which a guild of the Blessed Sacrament was established. Meanwhile it was decreed that a solemn procession should take place every year within the Octave of Corpus Christi, to commemorate this solemn event.

TWENTIETH DAY

HOW THE SOUL SHOULD PREPARE ITSELF TO WORTHILY RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION

"At this our solemn feast,
Let holy joys abound,
And from the inmost breast
Let songs of praise resound;
Let ancient rites depart,
And all be new around,
In ev'ry act and voice and heart."[1]

ALTHOUGH it is of faith that the Blessed Eucharist produces of itself sanctifying grace whenever the soul lays no obstacle to it by willingly adhering to mortal sin, yet this grace is received by us in a measure apportioned to the dispositions with which we actually approach this divine Sacrament, so that the greater these dispositions, the more abundant is the flow of divine grace in our souls. Now, of these dispositions some are remote, some proximate; and again some may be habitual, others actual.

[1] Hymn *Sacris Solemniis*, based on translation by J. D. CHAMBERS, from *The Hymns of the Breviary and Missal*, by REV. MATTHEW BRITT, O.S.B.

Beginning with the remote disposition required to receive worthily the Blessed Eucharist, we say that this consists in the state of grace; that is, that we should not have any mortal sin on our conscience, or if we have, we should confess it to the priest and receive absolution. This is what St. Paul expressly teaches, when he says: "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice."[2]

Indeed, it would be highly presumptuous to pretend to approach the Holy Table, which is a table of all purity and sanctity, with a polluted heart; that is, to dare receive in a soul that mortal sin has made the slave of the devil, the King of all glory, to make the Son of Man and His bitter passion a mockery, since He suffered and died precisely to destroy sin and overthrow the kingdom of Satan.

To live a life of grace is what is called by the Holy Fathers to receive spiritually the divine Eucharist, to eat and drink spiritually

[2] 1 Cor. xi. 28.

the body and blood of Christ, as a fitting preparation to the receiving of this great Sacrament. That is, a holy and pure life, led under the influence of divine grace, is the first necessary remote disposition to receive with fruit the Most Blessed Eucharist.

* * *

A soul that desires to derive the greatest fruit from the reception of the Blessed Eucharist should further endeavor to practise three virtues principally; namely, faith in the divine Presence, purity both of soul and body, and charity toward one's neighbor.

As regards faith, we know how our divine Saviour esteemed this virtue, as when he praised the Centurion and the Canaanean woman.[3] Now, as the Real Presence of Jesus Christ under the sacred species is a truth most remote from our understanding, hence faith in this mystery is most agreeable to God and disposes Him to grant us an abundance of the divine graces. A soul, therefore, which

[3] Matt. viii. 10; xv. 28.

desires to derive great spiritual advantage from this great Sacrament, should strive often to renew its faith in the divine Presence, as, for instance, when the clock strikes the hour, or at such other times that one may choose.

A special care to preserve one's heart and body undefiled is also a condition necessary for receiving the graces of this Sacrament in their fulness, for the Blessed Eucharist is indeed the Sacrament of spotless purity, as it contains the most pure flesh and blood of the Immaculate Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the most pure womb of the Virgin of virgins, Mary most holy. Hence, he who desires to derive from this great Sacrament an abundance of graces must try to kep away from his mind bad thoughts or imaginings and to resist courageously every temptation of the flesh.

But as this is the Sacrament of the boundless love of Jesus for us, hence those only can hope to derive the most copious fruits of salvation from it who endeavor to cultivate in

their hearts that beautiful flower of charity toward their neighbor wishing him good as they would to themselves and freely and generously condoning whatever offense he may have committed against them.

* * *

Besides disposing itself in a remote manner to worthily receive the Blessed Eucharist a soul that desires to draw from this Most Holy Sacrament the greatest possible fruit should also elicit, immediately before communion, some special acts by which it may prepare in itself a habitation worthy of its divine Guest and at the same time derive from the presence of Jesus the numerous graces of which He is the generous dispenser.

Indeed, a true Catholic should never forget to elicit acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition immediately before receiving the Blessed Sacrament, adding such prayers as may seem to him most appropriate.

But especially the soul should excite in itself an ardent desire of receiving this Sacra-

ment, saying with the Prophet: Come, O Lord and "be not slack."[4] For, as bodily hunger is the most appropriate disposition for assimilating food and deriving from it all the vital qualities it contains, so an earnest longing for this divine manna of the soul is the best calculated means for obtaining all the graces of which this Sacrament is the instrumental cause.

In reality, if a Christian makes the Blessed Eucharist the center of his life, if he often betakes itself in spirit to the prison of love where our divine Guest has made His permanent abode, if he realizes the great benefit which accures to him from the reception of this divine Sacrament, it cannot be but that he will habitually live in the desire of receiving it, and this desire will fit his soul for a greater abundance of divine gifts according to the scriptural saying: "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it."[5]

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[4] Ps. xxxix. 18.
[5] Ps. lxxx. 11.

EXAMPLE

THE CONVERSION OF OSWALD MILSER THROUGH THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

Oswald Milser was Governor of the fortress of Schlossberg, near Seefeld, in the Tyrol. He was a very proud man and the following fact which happened to him in connection with the Blesed Eucharist in 1384, is a proof both of the abhorrence in which this divine Guest holds the spirit of pride and haughtiness and His meekness in converting obdurate hearts.

Puffed up with the thought of his noble lineage and high degree, Oswald sought for distinctions even in the House of God. Once, on Maunday Thursday, this self-conceited man went to the parish priest, requesting that he should be given holy communion before anybody else. Further he wished to be communicated not with a small Host but with a large one, such as the celebrant himself uses as Mass. The priest, fearing the noble man's anger, condescended to his request. But God

soon showed how displeasing to Him was such an arrogant pretension.

Hardly had the Host been placed upon his lips, than he was seen to waver: the ground on which he stood, seemed to be melting away like wax and a chasm was being formed under his feet ready to swallow him. At such a tragic event, the proud man, suddenly brought to a sense of his stupid vanity, turned to God exclaiming: "Mercy, mercy." God, who wills not the death of the sinner but rather that he should be converted and live, ordered the ground to become solid again and the chasm to be stopped.

However, the unfortunate Oswald could not swallow the Host, which had remained intact on his tongue and threatened to suffocate him. The priest had to come and extract it from his mouth. The Host was then placed in a ciborium. But, lo! a new prodigy. It appeared all covered with small drops of blood. These miraculous events made a deep impression on Oswald's heart. Moved by a sincere

spirit of repentance, he left the world and its pomp and entered the monastery of Stams, where he lived two years in the practise of humility and penance. According to his desire, he was buried in the Abbey church at the entrance of the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament. The Sacred Host with the spots of blood was at first preserved in the church of Seefeld, but two hundred years after it was transferred to the chapel of the Precious Blood which the Archduke Ferdinand 2nd caused to be built in 1575. It is still to be seen and worshiped with great veneration.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY

HOW WE SHOULD GIVE THANKS TO GOD AFTER HAVING RECEIVED THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

"What shall I render to the Lord for all the Things that He hath rendered to me? I will Take the chalice of salvation: and I will Call upon the name of the Lord."[1]

AMONG the virtues which are most pleasing to God and man and which best reveal the nobility of mind and heart, is gratitude for benefits and favors received. In regard to God this is a bounden duty on our part, which embraces each and every individual of the human race; for, all that we have, we have received it from His bountiful hand. This is why the Apostle warns us always to abide in thanksgiving.[2]

As of all God's gifts the Blessed Eucharist is the principal, hence we should not omit to give due thanks to Him whenever we have been privileged to approach this august Sac-

[1] Ps. cxv. 13.
[2] Eph. v. 4.

rament. But it is of importance to consider the way in which we should fulfil this duty.

First of all, immediately after communion, we should entertain vivid sentiments of gratitude to our divine Lord, who has been so good as to give Himself entirely to us and desires nothing so much as that we should live in Him and He in us. This deep and heartfelt gratitude should be mixed with sentiments of profound admiration for God's infinite goodness and of sincere adoration and love of this divine Saviour, who is true God no less than he is true man.

But we should particularly make it a point to ask of Jesus Christ, whom we possess in our breasts, those graces which we ourselves know to be most necessary to us, and particularly that true humility, unflinching patience and unbounded charity of which He has given us such conspicuous examples in His mortal life and especially during His bitter passion. Neither should we omit to pray for the needs of our friends or relatives and those of the

Church at large. We need not be afraid to importune the Sacramental Lord by asking, as we may think, too much of Him, for His bounty knows no measure; and as our audacity in asking is a sign of our confidence in His goodness, so it is also a sure means to obtain what we ask for.

* * *

A Christian who really appreciates the gift which God has made to us of the true body and blood of His Son in the Blessed Eucharist, is not satisfied with thanking Him there and then after communion, but endeavors often to recall the great benefit he has received. As he knows that the grace of the Sacrament abides in his soul, so his thoughts go back occasionally during the day to the communion he has made in the morning, and in his heart he again thanks his divine Lord for that signal favor. In a word, he tries to live in a eucharistic atmosphere, making the thought of the Blessed Sacrament, as it were, the center of his life.

Remembering also that nothing is so pleasing to Our Lord than that we should often receive Him sacramentally, a Catholic who duly appreciates this great gift makes a firm purpose to approach the Holy Table as often as possible, thus making the next communion serve as an act of thanksgiving for the preceding one.

The Blessed Eucharist is the most excellent gift of God, and nothing is so displeasing to Him as to see it despised by men. We have an instance of this in the parable of the great supper to which a rich man invited many, but they all began to make excuses, a thing which so displeased that rich man that he sent his servant into the streets and lanes of the city and bade him bring in the poor and the feeble and the blind and the lame; but no one of those who had been first invited tasted of his supper.[3]

As, then, the keeping away from the communion table is an act of gross ingratitude

[3] Luke xiv. 16, *segg.*

toward God, so the purpose of approaching it as frequently as possible is the greatest proof that we can give our divine Saviour of our gratitude toward Him for having instituted such an august Sacrament.

* * *

The test of true friendship being the anxious care to avoid all that may displease our friend, it is natural that a soul grateful to our divine Lord for the great gift of the Blessed Eucharist and desirous to requite His love, should, after having received communion, endeavor to shun moral defects, especially those which are more obviously opposed to the nature of this Sacrament. Now, the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is, first of all, a mystery of faith; secondly a source of purity; thirdly, a pledge of unbounded love. A Christian, therefore, who has been admitted to the Holy Table, should firmly purpose to avoid all that might weaken his faith, tarnish the purity of his soul, or diminish the fervor of his charity.

First, then, considering how faith is "the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not,"[4] and that "without faith it is impossible to please God,"[5] a soul that has been favored by the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist, will carefully avoid all reading and all conversations which might endanger its faith. Likewise it will cast away, as the work of our devilish foe, all doubts about the mysteries of our Faith as taught us by Holy Church.

Again, in memory of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ, the Source of all purity, in him, a true Catholic will endeavor to keep his mind free from bad thoughts, his heart from bad desires, and his body from all that might even remotely tarnish his purity.

Lastly, remembering that Christ instituted this Sacrament on that very same night in which He was to be betrayed unto death, the faithful disciple of Jesus will make it a point

[4] Heb. xi. 1.
[5] *Ibid.* 6.

to practice brotherly charity without limit, comprehending in one fond embrace friend and foe, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, in order that "the charity of the brotherhood abide" continually "in him."[6]

Example

PUNISHMENT INFLICTED ON A BLASPHEMER

Blessed Cardinal Bellarmine, in his work of Controversies on the Blessed Sacrament,[7] relates, among other miracles regarding the Holy Eucharist, a fact which happened in the country of Gueldre, in the year 1561, and which served greatly to strengthen the faith of Christians in the Real Presence in those times in which when the heresy of Luther was doing so much harm to the Church.

As the parish priest of Nimègue, Anthony Worst was taking the Blessed Eucharist to a sick person on Easter Monday, he was met on

[6] Heb. xiii. 1.
[7] Controv. de Sacram. Euch., t. iii, c. viii.

his way by a young man brought up in the heresy of Calvin, who began to scoff at the august Sacrament. He held in his hand a hard egg, and by way of taunting, he exclaimed: "I shall sooner eat this hard egg, than your sick man will have swallowed his own idol." Meanwhile he thrust the egg in his mouth, accompanying his gestures with signs of contempt for the Blessed Sacrament.

The reader can well imagine how the faithful who were there present were horrified at such impious words. However, divine vengeance was not slow at reaching the rash and godless blasphemer. Though he made unheard of efforts to swallow the egg, he could in no way succeed, but felt as if he were about to be suffocated. Shortly after, as the priest carrying the sacred pyx was returning from the sick person, on passing before the house of that unfortunate young man, he heard him screaming from intense pain. The egg, penetrating into the flesh had produced an enormous swelling of the throat, causing the young

man's death. Thus he expired on the spot, miserably in the presence of that Lord of tremendous majesty whom he had so impiously offended.

This terrible event roused the people to a sense of wholesome fear. They understood that the good and benign Jesus, who abides with us in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar in order to be carried to the sick for their consolation, is also the Supreme Lord and Master of human life, who is not offended in vain.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY

HOW WE SHOULD MAKE THE BLESSED EUCHARIST THE CENTER OF OUR LIVES

"O Memorial of my Saviour dying,
Living Bread, that gavest life to man;
May my soul, its life from Thee supplying,
Taste Thy sweetness, as on earth it can."[1]

OUR Divine Saviour, after the Last Supper; that is, after He had instituted and distributed to His beloved disciples the Sacrament of His body and blood, delivered to them a most sublime discourse, teaching them all the secrets of the spiritual and inner life which this Sacrament is particularly destined to promote. Now, the whole content of this divine discourse may be summarized in this brief proposition: "As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in My love."[2]

Now, the Blessed Sacrament is the Sacrament of the love of Jesus Christ to us. There-

[1] Rhythm *Adoro te devote*, Translation by JOHN O'HAGAN.
[2] John xv. 9.

fore, to abide in the thought, love, and adoration of the Holy Eucharist is to abide in Our Saviour's love. In a word, if we wish for an easy and practical means of cultivating spiritual life in us, we should make this Sacrament the center of our thoughts, of our affections, and of our adoration.

In order to live a eucharistic life, the first thing which is necessary is that the mind should be well instructed in the truth of this divine Sacrament. A good Christian, therefore, who wishes to make the Blessed Eucharist the center of his life should not be satisfied with believing in the Real Presence of Jesus under the sacred species in a general way only. He should also endeavor to penetrate that great and consoling mystery at the light of what Catholic theology teaches on the subject.

He should then consider that it is not beyond God's power to change, at the words of a lawfully consecrated priest, the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of

that self-same Christ who now reigns in heaven; that it is not impossible for God to cause a full-grown human body to be present under the humble and limited species such as are those of a small host and a few drops of wine; that He can sanctify our immaterial soul and make it live a life of grace and virtue through material elements.

We may truly be convinced that esteem and devotion for this divine Sacrament will reign in a soul in proportion to its knowledge of the same as viewed in the light of the great truths which rule the orders both of nature and grace.

* * *

To live a truly eucharistic life it is not sufficient often to ponder on this great Sacrament or to study the philosophy of this wonderful mystery of God's love to us. It is also necessary to foster in one's heart sentiments of heartfelt love for our eucharistic Lord. And these sentiments should be em-

bodied in special acts of devotion, which may be both an outward expression and a new stimulus of our faith and love toward this divine Sacrament.

Foremost among these acts comes the daily assisting at Holy Mass and together with this, frequent, nay daily, communion, which practise was so faithfully followed by the first Christians and has been of late so warmly recommended by the Church. Now, to better accomplish this great action it is well to follow the method recommended by ascetic writers, of dividing the day into two parts: the first, following the reception of the Blessed Eucharist, to thank God for the great benefit He has done us by giving Himself to us in this august Sacrament; the second, in anticipation and preparation of the communion of the following day.

Next to frequent or daily assisting at Mass and receiving the Holy Sacrament, comes the beautiful practise of spiritual communion, which is so pleasing in the eyes of God and

may be made as often as one wishes. The facility with which this act of devotion can be performed and the abundant spiritual fruits which are derived from it, should induce us to often put it into practise.

Indeed, to make a good spiritual communion it is enough to be in a state of grace and to elicit acts of faith in the divine Presence, of hope in God's goodness and of love of our divine Saviour, with an ardent desire of receiving Him. This sweet Redeemer, then, comes into our hearts in reality, not as if He had not been there before, but asserting His presence by bearing with Him the choice graces of which He is so liberal a dispenser.

Lastly, a soul that is penetrated with a eucharistic spirit, does not omit to pay occasional visits to the divine Guest in our churches. These visits may be made spiritually; that is, by turning oneself with mind and heart to the holy tabernacle where He has taken His abode as in a prison of love. The fervent Catholic may likewise bodily

visit His Sacramental Lord in His material churches.

Love indeed is industrious, and for a soul enamoured of the Blessed Eucharist it is not difficult to find means of showing our divine Saviour its ardent love and thankful adoration.

* * *

But a Catholic who really appreciates the gift of God in the institution of the Holy Eucharist and has made it the center of his life, will not be satisfied with practising, himself, exercises of devotion toward this Most Holy Sacrament. He will also wish to draw others to the knowledge, love, and adoration of the same; in a word, he will become an apostle of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, and the means of so doing will not be wanting to him.

Sometimes he will seize the opportunity of teaching the ignorant what a great treasure we possess in the Blessed Eucharist. At other

times he will artfully introduce into the conversation this august Sacrament, thus communicating to others the flame of his devotion. Again, he will like to prepare the little ones, that is, the little children, whom Our Lord so much loves, for their first communion, or the dying, who are about to appear before the judgment-seat of God, to worthily receive the Viaticum.

A means also very appropriate to further this beautiful and salutary devotion consists in writing books or pamphlets directed to make known and loved this divine Sacrament or in raising and decorating altars where it is preserved.

A beautiful institution which of late has proved very successful in promoting this devotion is that of diocesan, national or international Congresses in which many persons meet together to pay a public homage to the King of Love hidden under the sacred species and to hear the praises of this august Sacrament publicly recited or to unite in a com-

mon prayer and supplication in view of obtaining the graces of which the Church and society at large stand most in need.

For one who really loves Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, appropriate means will surely be forthcoming to promote this salutary devotion.

Example

THE WAXEN CIBORIUM

Once two thieves broke into a church at night and stole a silver ciborium containing some consecrated Hosts, and took to flight. When outside the gate of the town, they threw away the eucharistic bread just in front of a beehive which was by the roadside.

Great was the sorrow of the faithful when they were apprised of the sacrilegious theft. But not knowing in what way the profanation had taken place, they could do nothing to recover the divine Sacrament, until it pleased God to make manifest the fate of those consecrated Hosts.

One day, as a gardener was passing near that beehive, he heard, instead of the ordinary buzzing, a most sweet harmony, while the little winged people showed unwonted animation about that spot.

Surprised and charmed at this admirable concert, the gardener remained for some time listening to it, without understanding the nature of the phenomena. His astonishment grew greater the following day when, passing there before dawn, he beheld above the beehive an extraordinary light in the midst of which the bees kept flying to and fro as if they had been exposed to the rays of the sun.

The fact came to the ears of the bishop, who hastened to the spot and was amazed when, on seeing the beehive opened, he found that those little insects, as if moved by supernatural instinct, had constructed a most beautiful ciborium with their own wax that it might be a decent dwelling for the King of love hidden under the eucharistic species.

The bishop then brought the marvelous ciborium to the church amid the shouts of joy of the bystanders. As for the robbers, when they heard of the prodigy, they openly confessed their misdeed, thus explaining how the presence of the consecrated Hosts in the beehive had come to pass.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY

THE BLESSED EUCHARIST A PLEDGE OF UNITY IN THE CHURCH

"O Lord Jesus Christ, . . . vouchsafe to grant (Thy Church) peace and unity according to Thy will."[1]

THE one great law which God stamped upon the world on creating it, is the law of unity. As He Himself, though distinct in person, is one in nature, wisdom, bounty, and power, so He willed that there should be but one great human family, one Redeemer of mankind, one Church in which, as in a sure and majestic ark, all men should find salvation. However, this unity, of which we see as it were a reflection stamped by God Himself upon the whole of creation, has a twofold object: first, it binds mankind to God, and second, it binds together the individuals of the great human family scattered upon the face of the earth. Now a pledge of this unity

[1] Prayer from "Ordinary of the Mass," before Communion.

willed by God is the august Sacrament of the Eucharist.

First of all the Blessed Eucharist is a pledge of unity of mankind with God, both inasmuch as it is a sacrifice and a sacrament. As a sacrifice the Blessed Eucharist is the very same sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered in His own Person upon the cross, a sacrifice so pleasing to the divine Majesty, that it sufficed to perfectly re-unite sinful humanity to God. As a sacrament, the Blessed Eucharist is a sensible sign instituted by Our Saviour to sanctify our souls and make them perfectly acceptable to the divine Majesty.

By the Blessed Eucharist, then, since it is both a most agreeable sacrifice offered to God and a sacrament of the New Law, man is made a partaker of the Sonship of God. He becomes the friend of his Maker, and thus is restored that unity of love and friendship which was intended in the beginning but was broken by sin.

This divine Sacrament, therefore, is similar to that bright rainbow, set by God in the clouds, which was the sign of a covenant between Him and the earth.[2] This heavenly sign is so pleasing to His divine Majesty that, on its account, He withdraws His hand from inflicting upon mankind the chastisements which our repeated crimes deserve.

* * *

The Blessed Eucharist is not only a pledge of unity of man with God. It is also a sacred and strong bond which unites men together and makes them all members of the great family of Jesus Christ.

The unity intended by God in the human family is broken by the following vices: first, by covetousness; second, by sensuality; third, by pride and a spirit of independence. Now the Blessed Eucharist is a powerful remedy against this threefold dissolving element.

First of all, material interests is that which often divides men's hearts. As the same

[2] Gen. ix. 13.

earthly goods cannot simultaneously be possessed by many, they easily become the cause of discord and strife and so we see nations fighting against each other for the possession of provinces. Now, in the divine Host we possess Him, who being infinitely "rich, became poor for our sakes,"[3] poor unto the straw of the crib, unto the nakedness of Golgotha, thus teaching men how to overcome that spirit of covetousness, a consequence of original sin, which has armed men and nations against one another.

Next, the passion of sensuality, by exciting in the hearts of men unchaste longings after carnal pleasures, is often the source of dissension, jealousy, and hatred, culminating in bloody strifes and criminal deeds. Now, the Blessed Eucharist, which contains the virginal body and blood of Jesus, makes those who receive it partake of His immaculate life, thus destroying every obstacle to the reign of charity in the soul.

[3] 2 Cor. viii. 9.

Finally, one of the greatest dividing elements in human society is the effort to free oneself from the law of obedience; and hence the spirit of anarchy and the conflict of individual wills setting themselves one against the other. Now, again we have in the Blessed Eucharist a remedy against this great evil, that is the striking example of Him who "became obedient unto death even to the death of the cross."[4]

Oh, if only the Most Blessed Eucharist were more perfectly known, better loved, and more universally received, how the ties of the human family would be straightened! And how the condition of society would be transformed into that of the first Christians, who were but "one heart and one soul"![5]

* * *

A symbol of the union which the Sacred Host creates and preserves in the world is expressed by God's own institution in the elements of bread and wine, which are the mat-

[4] Phil. ii. 8.
[5] Act iv. 32.

ter of this Sacrament, and are changed, by the words of the priest, into the true body and blood of our divine Saviour.

The bread is made out of many grains of wheat crushed and reduced into one mass of flour, and the wine out of many grapes squeezed together to form that excellent refreshment which gladdens the heart of man.[6] Therein, then, we have a striking reminder of the most dolorous passion of Our Lord, who "was bruised for our sins."[7] More particularly yet these sacramental elements bring home to us how those who partake of this Sacrament ought to be one with God, one among themselves in charity.

Thus the Blessed Eucharist becomes that strong and sweet tie that binds together the members of the great human family and unites it with its invisible head who is Jesus Christ, as also with its visible head, who is the Roman Pontiff. Just as the Blessed Eucharist contains the real body of Christ, so also it rep-

[6] Ps. ciii. 15.
[7] Ps. liii. 5.

resents His own mystical body, which is the great human family regenerated in His most precious blood. This heavenly Bread, which is given equally to all, at one time inspires the faithful to sing the same Credo of Catholic faith and puts in their hearts the same flame of divine charity, the same ideals of heavenly hope. "In one Spirit we have all been made to drink," says St. Paul.[8]

Example

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST REALLY CONTAINED IN THE CONSECRATED HOST

Some heretics have taught that, in the Blessed Eucharist, under the species of bread only the body of Christ is really present and hence if a Christian wishes to receive the whole Christ, that is, His body and blood, it is necessary for him to partake of both species.

God, however, was pleased once to manifest, by a striking miracle, the falseness of this statement, indirectly sanctioning the practise

[8] 1 Cor. xii. 13.

of the Church, which commands the Blessed Eucharist to be administered only under the species of bread. The miracle to which we allude is narrated by the illustrous Franciscan Friar Alexander of Hales, traditionally known as "Doctor Irrefragabilis" who died in Paris in 1245.[9]

Once some Religious of a monastery came to their superior, asking him to give them the use of the chalice, that is, communion under both species, saying that they could not believe they were receiving Jesus Christ whole and entire unless they were given the consecrated Wine together with the Host.

The superior sought to correct their error, but in vain. He then turned to God in prayer asking Him to enlighten his subjects and God in His mercy deigned to dissipate by a miracle the cloud of ignorance which dimmed their too material faith.

As the priest was dividing the Sacred Host at the altar suddenly blood was seen to ooze

[9] Part IV, incist. II, Memor. 2, art. 4, § 3.

from the fragments and the paten was filled with it. At this sight the incredulous Religious were startled: a sign was given them which gave evidence of how the blood of Christ is really in the Host as well as in the chalice. The celebrant then drew together the two fragments, and the blood which had issued therefrom reentered without leaving any trace on the paten.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY

THE BLESSED EUCHARIST, A SOURCE OF PEACE IN THE WORLD

"O saving Victim, opening wide
The gate of heaven to man below,
Our foes press on from every side,
Thine aid supply, Thy strength bestow."[1]

AMONG the names by which the Redeemer of the world was foretold by the prophets, one of the most conspicuous is that of "Prince of peace"[2] and Our Lord Himself was careful to confirm this prophecy when, stating the object of His mission, He said to His dear apostles: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you."[3]

In reality, the peace which Jesus Christ came to bring to mankind is widely different from that which the world promises to its adepts.

First of all, the peace of the world is based

[1] Hymn *Verbum Supernum*, Translation by Fr. Caswall.
[2] Is. ix. 6.
[3] John xiv. 27.

upon dogmatical concessions. It proposes to place all religious confessions on the same footing whilst it works out a creed from which it excludes every article not admitted by one or another of the various sects that pretend to lead man to happiness. Next, the peace which the world brings, rejects the principle both of obedience and property. They look for perfect happiness in freedom from all authority and in the unbridled and lawless pursuit after worldly goods. But of these we may well say what the prophet Jeremias declared of the false prophets of old: that they said "peace, peace, when there was no peace."[4] For, peace which is based upon doctrinal concessions can beget but confusion and cannot be acceptable to God, who is essential Truth; and that which has for its starting principle rebellion and socialism, must end in strife and warfare.

Not so the peace which Jesus Christ offers us through that divine olive wand which is the

[4] Jer. viii. 11.

Blessed Eucharist. By asking us to submit our minds and hearts entirely to the truth of the Real Presence of Himself in the consecrated Host, Our Lord Jesus Christ establishes in our minds and hearts a perfect equation between the word of God and our faith; and by ordering us to be submissive to lawful authority and not to seek earthly goods by unjust means, He procures us that perfect tranquility of order in which the true peace consists, according to the beautiful definition of St. Augustine.

* * *

Two things are particularly opposed to the possession of that perfect and true peace which Our Saviour has come to bring into the world. The first thing is the unrest of the soul following upon the disturbance and annoyance which exterior contradictions are wont to cause us. The second is that wavering of the mind resulting from the wanton multiplication of rash earthly desires.

On the one hand, the soul finding itself en-

compassed with many engrossing evils, is apt to lose that balance of mind which is the greatest warrant of peace; and unless it rest well upon its own weight, it is sadly tossed like a vessel in a great tempest. On the other hand, our wanton imagination buoyed up by our yearning after pleasure, is prone to present our minds with a limitless number of most erratic desires. If we do not possess the means of checking these desires, we shall find ourselves in continual fluctuation as to the course to be followed to reach happiness.

Now these two obstacles to perfect peace of mind are efficaciously removed by the Blessed Eucharist. First of all, this divine Sacrament contains the greatest good which we can possess on earth, that is the Sacred Person of Jesus Christ Himself. Now, as when possessing a very great good, we count for nothing the smaller trials of life, thus the Blessed Eucharist is apt to make us forget the miseries with which our life is continually encompassed. On the other hand, the possession of such a

great treasure as is Jesus Christ, our loving Saviour, is indeed calculated to satiate all our craving after limited and transient goods, for what can he wish for in whose heart the Lord of the world dwells with all His heavenly riches?

Just as this sacrament is the sacrament of unity, so it is also the sacrament of peace, of that perfect peace which, as St. Paul says, "surpasseth all understanding."[5]

Our God is indeed a God of peace. One thing He wills. One thing He seeks, the true and lasting peace of our hearts, and His thoughts are bent upon bringing us "peace and not affliction."[6]

* * *

The Holy Eucharist is both a sure pledge and a lasting fountain of the heavenly peace which Jesus Christ promised us. However, not all men choose to direct their steps in the way of that peace which Our Saviour, hidden in

[5] Phillip. iv. 7.
[6] Jer. xxix. 11.

the Blessed Sacrament, has taught us. Though endeavoring to avoid mortal sin, which entirely destroys our peace with God and our neighbor, many allow themselves to be oversolicitous with temporal cares and concerns, neither do they meet the trials of life with that supernatural faith, the light of which gives the things of this earth a celestial coloring.

Though the grace of the Sacrament abides in their hearts, they do not act according to its light. They yield to sentiments of ambition and jealously and to the desire of riches, honors, and pleasures. They even harbor in their hearts thoughts contrary to the beautiful virtue of charity and, without giving vent to thoughts of hatred and revenge, they do not show themselves ready to forgive as our divine Lord prescribes, from the bottom of their hearts.

Oh! pitiful indeed is the condition of that Christian who pretends to seek peace through methods different from those indicated by the

Prince of peace hidden under the sacramental species. Whatever they may say, whatever they may do, they cannot find perfect peace.

True and sincere devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, by uniting men to God and binding them together with the sweet tie of brotherly love, will infallibly end in the diffusion of that ineffable peace which the angel of God announced to men of good will.[7]

Example

THE MIRACULOUS COMMUNIONS OF ST. STANISLAS KOSTKA

While St. Stanislas Kostka, still a youth of sixteen years, was pursuing his studies at Vienna, he was living together with his brother and his master, in the house of a Lutheran gentleman who was greatly opposed to Catholic Faith. Now it happened that Stanislas fell very dangerously ill and was most anxious to receive the holy Viaticum. But his host protested that he would turn out the dying

[7] Luke ii. 14.

young man, rather than allow a Catholic priest to enter his house.

In this plight, Stanislas turned with confidence to St. Barbara, whom he had prayed to obtain the grace for which she is invoked, that of receiving the last sacraments before dying. Shortly afterward, he was seen to be absorbed in ecstasy, when an angel appeared to him, carrying the Most Blessed Sacrament and presenting it to his lips. The pious young man, though dying, suddenly found strength enough to get up and adore his God who thus came benignly to meet him. He then devoutly recited the *Confiteor* and the *Domine non sum dignus,* and received, from the angel's hand, the sacred Host with the signs of deepest devotion.

Once again was this pious youth honored with a similar favor. Having recovered from his illness, he resolved to the enter the Society of Jesus, and went to Augsburg, to ask admittance from the Father Provincial, who was then St. Canisius. On his way he approached

a church in which many people were gathered and he entered with the intention of assisting at Mass and receiving holy communion. Unfortunately this turned out to be a Protestant temple. But God again consoled His faithful servant. Suddenly, a host of angels appeared to him surrounding one of their number who was carrying the sacred Particle, which he deposited on the pure lips of Stanislas Kostka.

Thus did God reward the intense devotion of the pious youth toward the august Sacrament of the Altar.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY

THE HOLY MASS, MOST EXCELLENT SACRIFICE OF THE NEW LAW

"So He this Sacrifice
To institute did will,
And charged His priests alone
That office to fulfil:
In them He did confide:
To whom pertaineth still
To take, and to the rest divide."[1]

AMONG the principle duties by which a man is bound toward his Maker, first and foremost is that of offering him a sacrifice worthy of His greatness and majesty. To God we owe our existence, and He is our last end, in whom alone we may place all our trust of perfect and lasting happiness. Now this supreme homage to God's infinite greatness, this faith and confidence in His unfailing help. this total surrender of our own selves to Him as His creatures and servants, are attested by us when offering Him a sacrifice acceptable to His Heart.

[1] Hymn *Sacris Solemniis,* based on translation by J. D. CHAMBERS.

This is why men from the very beginning of the world are found to have offered to God various kinds of creatures, thereby protesting their reverence and perfect submission to the great Lord of heaven and earth. Later, that is, under the Law of Moses, God Himself deigned to manifest what sacrifices would be acceptable to Him, and prescribed the form and manner in which they should be offered.

Thus there was in the Old Dispensation a very great variety of sacrifices. Animals of different kinds were slain and offered every day according to the prescription of the Mosaic Law. Of these offerings some were made to God in testimony of the supreme worship which all creatures owe to Him. These were consumed by fire and therefore were called holocausts or burnt-offerings. Another kind of offering was presented to God in thanksgiving for the benefits received, and were for that reason called thank-offerings. Again, some victims were immolated either in

expiation of sin and were styled sin-offerings, or for the obtaining of special favors and were known as peace-offerings.

However, all these varieties of offerings had one general object, to bring men's minds nearer to God, making them, as it were, partake of His spiritual nature and enjoy more familiarly His company.

But however holy the sacrifices of the Old Law, may have been, we have in the New Dispensation a far better, greater and holier sacrifice, one which is most pleasing to God because it is none else than the sacrifice of our divine Saviour Himself in the Blessed Eucharist.

* * *

God, who is infinitely wise and infinitely good, had ordered a large number of sacrifices under the Old Law, in order that they might typify and announce the one great sacrifice of the New Covenant, which is the sacrifice of the cross.

By offering Himself on Golgotha for the

sins of the world, Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, accomplished an action which was so pleasing to His eternal Father, that all the past sacrifices lost their worth and significance in His eyes, and His complacency was centered upon that one great sacrifice, which was the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son.

He therefore decreed that the sacrifice of the cross should be perpetuated to the end of time in the august and mysterious rite of the eucharistic Mass. And so Jesus Christ, our sweet Saviour, instituted, at the Last Supper, the great Sacrament and Sacrifice of His body and blood, which, by the very fact that it signified and represented His future death upon the cross, was to be perpetuated for all the centuries and to constitute the one great sacrifice of the New Law.

Thus there is now in the Church but one sacrifice; namely, a sacrifice which commemorates and represents the sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ of Himself on the cross and which is one with that sacrifice. Indeed, the

Mass is the self-same sacrifice as the sacrifice of the cross, except that it is now offered on the altar without any shedding of blood and through the ministry of priests. And so is verified the beautiful prophecy of Malachy: "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my Name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my Name a clean oblation: for my Name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts."[2]

* * *

The sacrifice of the Mass being the true representation, commemoration and application of the sacrifice of the cross, it is evident that it holds the very first place in the liturgy of the Church; and as it is the action most pleasing to the divine Majesty, so it is also the most profitable to man. It is that which matters most both in the life of the Church as in that of individuals.

The great worth of the sacrifice of the Mass

[2] Mal. i. 11.

comes from this, that it is one and the same with the sacrifice of the cross. Though Christ our Lord died once only upon the cross, yet the virtue of His death abides forever in that special and sublime rite which He instituted in order to perpetuate it. Thus it its true to say that the sacrifice of the Mass is one and the same with the sacrifice of the cross, and that assisting at Mass means assisting at the death of Christ upon Calvary.

This explains the great respect with which the Church has always surrounded the celebration of Holy Mass and the eagerness both of the priests to comply daily with this holy rite and of the faithful to assist at the same as often as possible.

Oh, let us thank God for such a great benefit and let us take a firm resolve to assist, both bodily and in spirit, at this divine and health-giving sacrifice as often as we can and with all the devotion of which we are capable.

Example

THE DIVINE CRUCIFIX CONFIRMS THE REALITY OF THE PRESENCE OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

In the year 1255, on Maundy Thursday, which then fell on the 25th of March, a priest of Ratisbonne, in Bavaria, was taking the Blessed Sacrament to a dying person, when crossing a torrent, he lost his equilibrium and dropped the sacred ciborium into the bubbling waters. Great was his consternation and that of the faithful present. They began at once searching for the precious treasure, which fortunately they found after some time. In their faith they decided to build a chapel on the spot where the accident had taken place.

From that time forward, the faithful came in great numbers to visit the devout sanctuary. But the concourse of people became greater still after a miraculous event took place which confirmed their faith in that great Mystery.

Once a priest was celebrating Mass there, when he was assailed by violent doubts re-

garding the changing of wine into the blood of Christ. As he was hesitating to raise the consecrated chalice, a great wooden crucifix which surmounted the altar, suddenly stretched out its arms toward the celebrant; it then took hold of the chalice and exposed it to the adoration of the faithful. The priest was astounded. He fell on his knees, humbly acknowledging his faith and with many tears asking forgiveness for his incredulity. The Saviour, then, to recompense his humility, lowered His arm and placed the chalice back in the hands of His minister.

The sanctuary where this prodigy took place soon became a place of pilgrimage for the pious worshippers of the Sacrament of love, and the miraculous crucifix, blackened by age, still exists as a witness both of the divine Presence and of the faith of the many generations which have come to worship that sweet Saviour who gave His blood for the redemption of the world.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY

THE HOLY MASS A PERFECT HOLOCAUST TO THE DIVINE MAJESTY

"Christ hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness."[1]

AMONG the obligations of man to God, one of the most important is that he should acknowledge Him as his first beginning and his last end, consecrating himself entirely to his divine Majesty for time and eternity. This we do inwardly when acknowledging in our hearts our total dependence upon God and surrendering to Him as to our supreme Lord and Master all that we are and all that we have.

The duty of adoring God and acknowledging His supreme dominion over all things regards not individuals only, but nations also. This duty was complied with by our first parents and later by the patriarchs. Even the

[1] Eph. v. 2.

pagans understood and practised this great duty. Their worship though mixed with error was directed to revere God and testify their utter subjection to Him and to His rule. Our divine Lord Himself, in the days of His humility, did not forego this essential duty. When twelve years of age, we are told, He journeyed with His parents to Jerusalem, there to adore God in conformity with the Law of Moses. During His public life also, we find that He never let the paschal time go by without visiting the holy city for the same purpose.

But this sweet Saviour knew full well that God could not be satisfied with these material offerings. Hence "coming into the world, He said: Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not: but a body Thou hadst fitted to me . . . then I said, Behold, I come: in the head of the book it is written of Me: that I should do Thy will, O God."[2] And so our divine Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself to His

[2] Heb. x. 5, 7.

Father on the altar of the cross to be a perfect holocaust to His divine Majesty.

* * *

The sacrifice which our divine Saviour offered of Himself on the cross, was a perfect testimony of God's entire dominion over the world, and a complete adoration most pleasing to the divine Majesty. But in order that this act might be perpetuated to the end of time, Jesus Christ instituted the most holy sacrifice of the Mass, which in reality is one with the sacrifice of the cross, so that every time Mass is said, a holocaust is offered to God as pleasing to His heart as was the sacrifice of Calvary.

The fact that the sacrifice of the Mass is one thing with the sacrifice of Calvary is the reason why it is so excellent an institution that nothing can compare with it; and one so pleasing to God, that by offering it or assisting at it we may rest satisfied as far as our obligation of adoring Him is concerned.

As Our Lord, by making a complete sac-

rifice of Himself to His Father on the cross, brought all His previous acts of humble and devoted worship to a consummation, adding the finishing stroke to His immolation by His own death; so the great mystery of His passion as represented and commemorated in the Mass, recalls in its sublime significance, that perfect holocaust which that loving Saviour made of Himself from the womb of His Mother until His death between two thieves.

* * *

Great indeed is the virtue of the sacrifice of the Mass, since it is an act of supreme adoration by which we testify our complete dependence on God. That is why Holy Church has made it a strict obligation for every Christian to assist at the Holy Sacrifice at least every Sunday, though fervent souls make it a point not to let a day pass without paying this act of perfect homage to their heavenly Lord and Master.

But in order that this tribute of devotion may be the more pleasing to the divine Maj-

esty, it is necessary that man should offer to God, together with the Victim of Calvary, his whole self, consecrating to Him, by an act of perfect immolation, all his thoughts, desires, affections, and aspirations; nay, his whole being, in union with our crucified Saviour.

But as that which is of greater worth in us and which we most value is our will, so we should endeavor to make the sacrifice of the same to God with a generous heart, humbly submitting to all His dispositions in our regard and accepting all the crosses which His fatherly hand will choose to send us, often saying with our divine Saviour: "O God, not My will, but Thine be done."[3]

We should also, when assisting at Holy Mass, say from the bottom of our hearts that beautiful prayer of the Roman Missal: "In a spirit of humility and with a contrite heart may we be received by Thee, O Lord, and may the sacrifice we this day offer up be well pleasing to Thee, who art our Lord and our God."[4]

[3] Luke xxii. 42.
[4] Ordinary of the Mass, at the Offertory.

As at Holy Mass Christ our Lord offers Himself to His Father with all the praise and glory which He rendered Him on earth. So, when assisting at the divine Sacrifice we should unite our praises and adorations to His, in order that our holocaust may be complete and prove perfectly agreeable to the divine Majesty.

Example

THE EUCHARISTIC MARVELS AT LOURDES

Since the year 1888, the great international yearly pilgrimage to Lourdes has taken the shape of an eucharistic demonstration in which Our Lord, hidden under the sacramental species, is pleased to show forth His might and glory. Up to that date, the miracles which took place at that celebrated shrine were usually worked at the intercession of the glorious Mother of God. But at the great pilgrimage of that year, which began on the 21st of August, the thought came to a pious priest to have the Most Blessed Sac-

rament associated with the prayers to Our Lord by being brought processionally, as it were in triumph, in the midst of the numerous sick laid out before the Grotto of the Apparition.

At four o'clock in the afternoon a long procession started from the basilica and wended its way toward the grotto. It was formed by a large multitude of pious pilgrims holding lighted tapers in their hands, while a Bishop carried in solemn pomp the august Sacrament, which was escorted, as by guard of honor, by a large number of priests and pious laymen, who kept acclaiming the hidden King of love: "Jesus, Son of David, give health to our sick."

Suddenly eight sick persons, whose lives had been despaired of, rose from their couches and followed the procession, while the crowd, full of enthusiasm intoned the Magnificat in thanksgiving for such striking graces.

From that day forward, in the public demonstration of faith of which Lourdes was the

theater, it became customary for miracles to take place when the Blessed Sacrament was being carried in procession through the files of sick arranged in rows before the Grotto. It seemed as if the sweet Mother of Jesus would wish to efface herself in order that all the glory and praise might go to her Son. But all well-informed Catholics know full well that no grace comes to us except through the intercession of our blessed Lady, who is truly "our life, our sweetness, and our hope."

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY

THE HOLY MASS, A MOST EXCELLENT THANKSGIVING SACRIFICE

"Having lifted up His eyes to heaven to Thee, God, His almighty Father, giving thanks to Thee, blessed the bread."[1]

AS THE Mass is a perfect holocaust to the divine Majesty, so also is it for man a means of giving God due thanks for all the benefits He has poured upon him, and for that reason it is also called a thank-offering.

When we reflect upon the many graces which God has granted us, we easily realize how it is our strict duty to give Him due thanks, for gratitude is among the very first virtues which we are bound to practise. The law of gratitude is observed by the very beasts which at times have been found to change their cruel anger into kind homage to their benefactors. How much more, then, has this

[1] From "Ordinary of the Mass."

law to be observed by man endowed with reason and amply benefitted by his Creator.

The being which we possess with all our inward and outward faculties, we have received from God, who in the course of our lives has never ceased to shower upon us endless tokens of His fatherly providence. Indeed, we are not able of ourselves to thank God in a worthy manner, unless He Himself teaches us a suitable way. And this way we have it precisely in the august sacrifice of the Mass.

There were indeed many sacrifices in the Old Covenant prescribed by the Law of Moses for the purpose of testifying to God, man's gratefulness for the benefits received. These were particularly offerings in flour and the fruits of the earth. Most pleasing in the eyes of God was the sacrifice of bread and wine, as when Melchisedech, a priest of God and King of Salem, offered the same to God after Abraham's victory over his enemies.[2]

[2] Gen. xiv. 18.

This is the most perfect type of the eucharistic sacrifice in which under the species of bread and wine, the very Person of our divine Saviour is offered to God as a thanksgiving sacrifice most pleasing to the divine Majesty.

This one sacrifice has now replaced all the different sacrifices of the Old Law. It is of such great value, that by offering it in union with the priest on the altar, we may be sure of having perfectly fulfilled our duty of giving thanks to God for all His favors.

* * *

The most suitable way to give due thanks to God, our most loving and supreme Benefactor, is disclosed to us by the Royal Psalmist. When making reference to the Blessed Eucharist, he says that there is no better means of giving due thanks to God than by offering this divine sacrifice. "What return shall I offer to the Lord for all the benefits which He hath rendered unto me?" And answering himself, he says: "I will take the chalice of

salvation and I will call upon the name of the Lord."[3]

We should really rejoice for having, in Holy Mass, the sublimest sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving by which we can testify our tribute of gratitude to such a benevolent Lord and King as God is. We owe it to the excess of His love for us that not only He should load us with so many benefits, but also place within our reach the means of worthily thanking Him for all His favors. For, as this sacrifice was instituted by our divine Redeemer principally in recognition of the divine beneficence and as a thank-offering to His Majesty, so when we celebrate or hear Holy Mass, Jesus Christ, who is immolated on the altar in an unbloody manner, becomes, as it were, our own property, and we, in our turn, offer Him to God the Father, thus paying our heavy debt of thanksgiving to His fatherly providence.

Our Lord Himself gave us an example of

[3] Ps. cxv. 12, 13.

how we should solve our debt of thanks to the divine Majesty, when, in the Last Supper, before consecrating His own body and blood, He raised His eyes to heaven and gave thanks to His Father: *Elevatis oculis in cælum, tibi gratias agens.*

* * *

The most blessed Sacrament of the Altar is in a most excellent manner the Sacrament of love, the greatest gift which God has made to man, and this is why it is called the "Eucharist"; that is, God's gracious favor to us. As, therefore, it is for us the best means by which we can show our thankfulness to God, so also we should acknowledge this wonderful benefit by thanking Him from the bottom of our hearts.

But, alas! how many Christians are there, who not only do not appreciate this divine favor, but even disregard such a great gift, thus ungratefully despising the donor. To our divine Saviour, the heavenly Guest of our souls, may well be applied the words Ecclesiasticus: "He shall entertain and feed

and give drink to the unthankful, and moreover He shall hear bitter words."[3] But what are the effects of this ingratitude? The Holy Ghost Himself tells us, "The hope of the unthankful shall melt away as the winter's ice, and shall run off as unprofitable water."[4]

At the sight of so much ingratitude, a true Christian heart cannot but be sadly moved and wish to make amends to our loving Lord, not only by adoring Him in the Blessed Sacrament, but also by making himself the apostle of this beautiful devotion, inviting all creatures to love, praise, and worship this most holy and divine Sacrament and give God due thanks for such a great benefit.

Example

A SAILOR RESCUED FROM DEATH THROUGH THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

The holy Pope Gregory the Great relates, on the fourth book of his *Dialogues,* of a bishop of Palermo named Agatho, who once

[3] xxix. 37.
[4] Wis. xvi. 29.

visited Rome, having been summoned there by Pope Pelagius II. When on the sea, a violent tempest broke out, which soon tore off the sails of the ship and broke the mast asunder. Seeing there was nothing to be hoped for on the part of men, the crew as well as the passengers turned their eyes to heaven, asking God that He would free them from that terrible danger.

In that moment one of the sailors, named Baraca, was assailed by a furious wave and carried adrift together with a board which had been tied on to the ship. The ship, however, could land, though with much difficulty, on the small island of Ustica, near the coast of Sicily. There the bishop, seeing that the sailor who had been lost sight of had not returned, ordered a Mass to be said for him, after which the ship resumed her voyage toward Rome.

On arriving in the harbor, the bishop's surprise was great, as he beheld on the shore the sailor Baraca, whom everyone had

thought dead. On asking him how he had been able to escape so great a danger, he answered that, after three days of frantic efforts to cling to the board and thus escape death, he was about to die through extreme weakness, when a venerable man, full of awe and majesty, appeared to him with a loaf in his hand, which he bade Baraca to eat. This mysterious nourishment had infused in him new vigor. Shortly afterward a ship bound for Rome had passed by and taken him aboard.

The bishop, on hearing this wonderful event, inquired about the day and hour when this miraculous help had come to the sailor. It was found that this was at the very moment that the divine sacrifice had been offered for him. Thus, then, at the time when the eucharistic sacrifice was offered to God for this man, a material bread had been brought to him by an angel for the preservation of his life, and Mass had hardly been finished, when a vessel had rescued him from the jaws of death.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY

THE HOLY MASS, A MOST EXCELLENT PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE

"Almique membra corporis
Amor socerdos immolat."[1]

FROM the moment that our first parents disobeyed God by eating of the forbidden fruit in paradise, they made themselves and all their progeny liable to the stain of original sin, which makes all men incur the wrath of God even before they disclose their eyes to the light of this world. Moreover, that sin of our first parents threw wide open the door to innumerable sins of thought, word, and deed by which the just anger of an offended God is excited. Hence, no man, excepting our divine Saviour and His holy Mother, is exempt from sin, which, as a heinous outrage to an all-holy God, is justly punished by Him both in this world and the next

[1] Hymn of the Church.

—in this world, by innumerable trials; in the next, by eternal fire.

To sinful man, however, God promised mercy and forgiveness, provided he should offer His divine Majesty a just and adequate compensation for his transgressions with a humble and contrite heart.

This is why, in the Old Dispensation, Moses was directed to command the children of Israel to stay and offer to God a great variety of animals, which were called victims of propitiation, directed to appease divine Justice and admit man again into the favor of divine friendship.

These victims, however, being but material offerings, could be acceptable to God only inasmuch as they represented in His sight that one great Victim of Golgotha, that is, Jesus Christ Himself, the true Son of the Eternal Father, the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, who, out of love for us, offered His own sacred body and blood, the body and blood of a God, on the altar of the cross.

* * *

The sacrifice of our divine Saviour on the cross was of itself sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world, for it was the sacrifice of a divine Victim, and thus a perfect compensation was made to the offended majesty of God. This is why a new sacrifice could not be instituted after the sacrifice of the cross was completed; neither can this sacrifice be repeated, it being infinitely efficacious for obtaining the remission of all sins.

However, this one sacrifice is to be applied, in order that it may produce its effect of appeasing God. And thus it is that our blessed Saviour instituted the Holy Mass which being a living commemoration and representation of the sacrifice of the cross, is one with it, while it actually serves to apply to us the infinite satisfactions of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus it is, that in Holy Mass all the sufferings of our divine Redeemer are brought back, as it were, in the sight of God for the redemption of the world. The sinner, therefore, may rejoice; because by assisting at Holy

Mass with faith and devotion, all the sufferings and satisfactions of our sweet Lord, His bitter passion and death on the cross are represented to the eternal Father as a superabundant compensation for all his transgressions. The Mass is indeed that celestial rainbow set by God in the heaven of the Church, as a token of lasting friendship between man and his Creator.

* * *

If we bear in mind the special time when our blessed Saviour instituted the sacrifice of propitiation of the New Law, we shall see clearly how, in His mind and intention, this august sacrifice was to borrow all its virtue from His passion and death. For, the Last Supper, at which the divine Sacrament was instituted, took place almost immediately before the dolorous passion began, which was to culminate with the death of Christ on the cross. Therefore St. Paul expressly warns the faithful that every time they shall eat of this bread and drink of the chalice, they shall

"declare the death of the Lord until He come."[2] Just as a man will forgive the wrong done him by his fellow-men, in consideration of an act of humiliation or of atonement performed for his sake, so God's anger is appeased by the priceless oblation of the sufferings and death of his only-begotten Son, which sufferings and death are practically commemorated and vividly represented, though in a bloodless manner, in the sacrifice of Holy Mass.

This divine sacrifice does not indeed, in the case of mortal sin, supersede the necessity of going to confession; but in virtue of the copious grace it bestows on the soul, not only does it wash away venial sins, but also it brings man to perfect contrition of heart. This together with the firm purpose of going to confession in due time, suffices to remit the guilt even of mortal sin.

[2] 1 Cor. xi. 25.

Example

LIBERATION FROM THE DEVIL'S OBSESSION THROUGH THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

The Blessed Eucharist not only secures to man an abundance of the divine graces. It also frees him from the bondage of our infernal foe, the devil.

As St. Bernard was once in Milan, he was about to celebrate Holy Mass in the basilica of St. Ambrose, when an aged lady of an honorable family of that town was brought to him, in order that he might free her from the bondage of the devil, who for many years had been harassing her. The effect of the evil spirit on her was that he had caused her to lose hearing, sight, and speech, and had even distorted her limbs in a most unsightly manner.

St. Bernard began by exhorting the faithful who filled the church, to pray for that unfortunate woman, and ordered that she should be brought to him for the exorcism. But the devil by whom she was possessed held

her so firmly, that no human effort could move her from her place.

Seeing this the Saint began the celebration of Mass, turning toward the possessed woman and making on her the sign of the cross each time he blessed the oblations. But this only served to excite more and more the infernal enemy's fury. Having finished the Lord's Prayer, St. Bernard took in his hand the paten on which lay the consecrated Host and raised it above the head of the unfortunate woman, saying: "Here is thy judge, O spirit of evil I command thee, by the might of His Majesty, to depart from the body of this servant of God and never to enter into it again."

At these words the devil being unwilling to quit his victim, made a renewed and desperate effort to torment the poor woman, venting his fury on her with increased violence. But when, after the fraction of the Host, the Saint proceeded to give the kiss of peace to the deacon who, in his turn, imparted it to the assembly, the demon was obliged to acknowl-

edge himself conquered and, screaming with rage and fury, finally abandoned that poor woman whom he had so ruthlessly tortured for such a long time.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY

THE HOLY MASS, A MOST EFFICACIOUS SACRIFICE OF IMPETRATION

"He that spared not even His own Son . . . how hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?"[1]

MANY are the graces both temporal and spiritual of which we stand in need in this our earthly pilgrimage, to enable us happily to reach our final goal. These graces are entirely depending on the good favor of divine mercy, for God alone is able so to arrange the events of our lives and succor us in our misery, as to secure for us that supernatural help which will make us triumph over the many difficulties we daily encounter in our path.

But God, who is "rich in mercy"[2] does not abandon us whenever we have recourse to Him with true confidence and filial love, provided our entreaties bear the recommendation

[1] 1 Rom. viii. 32.
[2] Eph. ii. 4.

of His only-begotten Son, our dear Lord Jesus Christ, whose prayers to His Father have always been and always will be graciously heard.[3]

Now, all the prayers and supplications which our divine Saviour made to His Father during His mortal life, as also during His bitter passion and at the moment of His death, are as it were brought back anew at the throne of divine mercy in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Nay, that sacred humanity of Jesus, which is present on our altars and is daily offered to the eternal Father is in itself a constant, living and most eloquent supplication to the throne of divine mercy for us poor sinners. For this sacred humanity is there with its hallowed hands and feet still bearing the marks of the nails which pierced them and with that sacred and loving heart still showing the scar of the wound which the soldier's lance left in it.

And so the sacrifice of the Mass is for us

[3] Heb. v. 7.

a most potent and secure means of obtaining for ourselves and others graces and favors, both spiritual and temporal, in view of our eternal salvation. Innumerable indeed are the spiritual graces which we may obtain through the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

* * *

Many are the necessities and concerns of life on which the welfare of our souls depends. We need supernatural light to guide our steps, and grace and strength to sustain us on our journey heavenward. We need the actual assistance of the Holy Ghost that He may illumine, encourage, and console us in the constant combat.

Now, the holy sacrifice of the Mass obtains for the devout Christian light and strength to enable him to lead a truly spiritual life, to overcome the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, to endure patiently, nay, with interior gladness and full resignation, the troubles and sufferings of this life. It instils into his mind and heart a new vigor

to fight the good fight and to persevere in the practice of virtue to the end of his days. This divine sacrifice is, moreover, a source of temporal graces and favors inasmuch as these may be helpful to us in obtaining eternal life. But there is one grace especially which we may hope to obtain from the mercy of our good Lord through the most holy sacrifice of the Mass. That is the great and the inestimable grace of a good and holy death. We may well believe that those pious souls who in life were in the habit either of devoutly hearing Mass as often as they could or of assisting at it in spirit, shall be consoled and gladdened at death by the presence of the divine Redeemer and His holy Mother.

* * *

The Mass is also most efficacious for alleviating the suffering of the souls of purgatory by procuring the speedy remission of the pain due to their sins and thus accelerating their deliverance from that place of suffering.

It is of faith that the souls of men which,

on departing this life, are not perfectly cleansed by perfect contrition from all stain of sin and have therefore still some debt to pay to divine Justice, must remain in purgatory, there to suffer until the last farthing is paid.[4] But these pains are great indeed. For not only is the soul imprisoned in that place of darkness, but particularly it is kept back from joining itself to God, the object of its insatiable yearning. "As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters,"[5] so also the soul that is in purgatory panteth after God, whom it knows to be so great, so good, so beautiful, so amiable; and this ardent longing is its greatest torment. Now the sacrifice of the Mass is a most efficiacious means of obtaining from God the release of the souls that are still suffering in purgatory since it is both a propitiatory and impetratory sacrifice. For in Holy Mass not only can the infinite merits of Jesus Christ be applied to those suffering

[4] Matt. iv. 26.
[5] Ps. xli. 2.

souls, but also this divine Saviour Himself really present under the species of bread and wine and immolated by the words of consecration, entreats His heavenly Father, with unspeakable groanings, to free those souls so dear to Him from the chains of their prison and admit them into His presence, to enjoy forever the happiness of the Blessed.

Example

Victory of King Ethelred over the Danes

In the year 871, the Danes having made an incursion into England, King Ethelred hastened with his brother Alfred to drive them away. However, as it was already evening when they reached the enemy's camp, they resolved to defer the attack until the next day.

At daybreak Alfred was ready to fight; Ethelred, on the other hand, had not yet been seen out of his tent. Alfred fearing lest the Danes should fall on the English army and

destroy it, sent a messenger to Ethelred begging him to delay no longer.

Ethelred was then assisting at Holy Mass. He sent word to his brother that he would not come until the divine Sacrifice was over, adding that he would rather lose what he held most dear in this world, than postpone the glory of God to his own interests.

Alfred, however, not able to restrain himself any longer, began to attack the enemy. But as the Danes' position was more advantageous than that of the English, he was thrown back with his army which even began to withdraw in confusion. At that very moment, Ethelred came out of his tent and, making the sign of the cross, went undauntedly forward. This sudden act of heroic courage so impressed his soldiers, that they rallied in a moment and slew the chiefs of the Danes, winning thereby a brilliant victory.

This wonderful event was justly considered by many as a recompense for Ethelred's great faith in the protection of the Lord of hosts

and as a sign of divine favor for his devotion and fidelity in assisting at the holy sacrifice of the Mass.[6]

[6] Annales Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ, an. 871.

THIRTIETH DAY

HOW WE SHOULD ASSIST AT HOLY MASS

"Hidden God, devoutly I adore Thee."[1]

HOLY Church teaches us that in each Mass that is celebrated, are to be found all the fruit and usefulness which Christ Our Lord procured by His death on the cross on Good Friday.[2] This being the case, we may easily infer what inward sentiments should animate a true Christian when assisting at the Holy Sacrifice.

First, considering that the sacrifice of the altar is in substance the very same as the sacrifice of the cross, we should, when assisting at Holy Mass, imagine ourselves to be on Calvary in company with our blessed Lady, St. John and St. Mary Magdalen, when our loving Saviour, hanging on the wood of the cross, gave up His soul into the hands of His

[1] Hymn *Adoro te devote*, Translation by JOHN O'HAGAN.
[2] De Consecrat., Dist. II.

eternal Father, thus completing the immolation of Himself for the salvation of the world.

Moreover, as a devout Christian should consider himself as one with our divine Saviour, of whom he is a member, while Jesus Christ is our head, hence he should when assisting at Mass, offer himself, in a spirit of humility and in a contrite heart together with the Host which the priest offers on the altar. Nay, as the faithful are themselves a royal priesthood[3] they should unite with the priest while he is presenting to God the divine Victim in the name of the congregation.

Lastly, as the Victim of the sacrifice is the true body and blood of our divine Saviour, which He gives us to be our food and our drink, hence, when assisting at Holy Mass, we should make it a point to partake sacramentally of the Blessed Eucharist, or, if this be not possible to do so at least spiritually asking Our Lord to come and dwell in our

[3] 1 Pet. ii. 9.

hearts with His gifts and virtues and never to depart from us.

When heard with these intentions, Holy Mass cannot but produce very precious and lasting fruits of sanctification in the soul.

* * *

The Mass being the greatest act of worship of man to God, nay the one thing that matters, it should be surrounded, as regards both the celebration and the attendance, with great respect and deep-felt reverence.

With regard to the celebration of this great sacrifice, Holy Church has been careful to surround it with a display of outward splendor befitting the sanctity of the Victim that is offered and the majesty of God to whom it is immolated. With this end she instituted most elaborate and awe-inspiring ceremonies, representing the various phases of Our Lord's mortal life, of His bitter passion and death, of His glorious resurrection and ascension.

This the Church has done in order to rouse her children to a deep sense of esteem and

heart-felt devotion toward the august sacrifice of the altar. It is, then, meet that the faithful, when assisting at Holy Mass, should so conduct themselves as befits the solemn action that is being performed. First of all, they should let themselves be thoroughly instructed in the sacred ceremonies, well distinguishing the various parts of the Mass and their relation to the mysteries of the life, death, and resurrection of Our Lord, and while following the priest at the altar, they should elicit appropriate acts of love, adoration, reverence and gratitude, thus deriving for themselves and those for whom they pray the greatest possible fruit.

We may confidently assume that the eternal salvation of those who endeavor to assist at Holy Mass with attention and devotion is already secured, inasmuch as they may confidently expect that God will give them all the graces necessary to conquer the world, the flesh, and the devil and happily reach the harbor of eternal life.

* * *

As the Mass is the one great sacrifice of the New Law which comprehends all that belongs to God's worship and secures for us all the graces procured for us by the passion and death of Jesus Christ, our dear Saviour, it follows that as a priest, unless absolutely prevented, never lets a day pass without celebrating this divine sacrifice, so the devout Catholic makes it a point daily to assist at it, even at the cost of undergoing some inconvenience. Moreover, there are not wanting generous souls who, appreciating the great mystery of love which is being accomplished without interruption on the altars of the Catholic Church, make it a point to be present, so far as they can, at several Masses each morning thus endeavoring to atone for the coldness and ingratitude of so many men who, wholly absorbed by worldly interests, give no heed to this Sacrament of love or even moved by unconceivable hatred, turn against it the poisoned arrows of their satanic fury.

A good and fervent Catholic, on the other

hand, is not content with bodily assisting daily at Holy Mass; he also makes it a point, several times in the day, especially at the striking of the hour, to renew his intention of partaking spiritually of the fruit of the divine Sacrifice which is being actually celebrated in one place or another of the world, thus giving God renewed praise and glory and securing an abundance of the divine blessings for his eternal salvation.

Example

VISIBLE APPARITION OF OUR LORD IN THE EUCHARIST

The celebrated Doctor of the Church, St. Peter Damian, among several other eucharistic miracles, relates the following. The Bishop of Amalfi was once celebrating Holy Mass, when a doubt of incredulity crossed his mind; how was it possible that the true and entire body of Christ should be present under the sacramental veil?

He was still in this interior disposition, when he came to the point of dividing the sacred species according to the liturgical rite. At this moment the eucharistic bread was seen to give way in his hands to the flesh of the Saviour, and his fingers were all bedewed with blood. At this sight the Bishop fell on his knees in an act of adoration full of faith and repentance, and the Host resumed its ordinary form. Thus did God show how jealous He is of the honor due to this Sacrament of divine love.

Another fact related by the same holy doctor and which points to the same object, happened near Monte Cassino. A woman, yielding to diabolical suggestions, carried away into her own dwelling the eucharistic bread which she had received in church, in view of desecrating it. But a priest was informed of this. He repaired to the woman's house before she had been able to accomplish her evil designs and took away the Blessed Sacrament from her. But in the act of unfolding the linen

cloth in which the Sacred Host was enveloped, the body of the Lord was seen visibly in one half of the consecrated bread, while the other half had preserved the ordinary shape and color.

It may be asked why the miracle took place with this difference between the two portions of the Host. It seems as though God had willed, by such a manifest testimony to confound the unbelief of heretics inasmuch as they refused to accept the dogma of the Real Presence in the eucharistic Mystery. From the fact that the body of Jesus Christ was made visible under one half of the Host while the other half preserved its ordinary form, the faithful were lead to understand that the heavenly Bread, which is the Bread of Angels, is after the consecration, truly, really, and substantially the body of Our Saviour born of the Blessed Virgin Mary.[4]

[4] St. Peter Damian, Opusc. xxxiv. P. L. t. cxlv, Col. 573.

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